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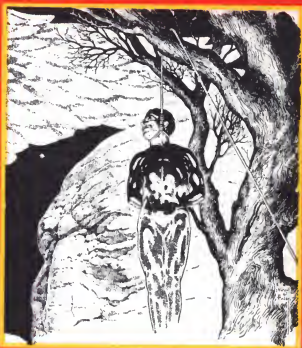
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# STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

Volume 3

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

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# the editor's page

The history of literature, no less than any other sort of history, is filled with ironic events. Had Willard Huntington Wright not suffered a breakdown from overwork in the twenties, the odds are that I would never have heard of him, and that most of you who read this never would have, either. More than that, there's still a reasonable chance that a number of you may not have heard of his real name, rather than the name by which he is most widely known.

Precisely what he was, the exact specialty under which he had attained a highly respected position before this seeming mishap, is something that has long since departed from my memory: and while a good historian should research such matters, circumstances have forced me to be less than thorough in this matter, unless this column were to be delayed until the next issue. I could say that I decided to give some of you, the more learned of my readers, a chance to write in and supply the missing background (and, of course, I'm actually doing just that—letters from any of you on this will be welcomed and enshrined in *The Cauldron*) but this isn't the true reason; the fact is, I never got the time to dig around in the Public Library or elsewhere for the information.

But I do remember an article by our author that appeared in the old

*AMERICAN* magazine, which by then had presented at least one of the series we are concerned with, relating the circumstances that attended the conception and birth of this famous detective. Wright had been very sick for some time, but was now beginning to feel something like himself again; nonetheless, his doctor was adamant: no heavy reading of any kind. It seemed like an indefinite sentence to utter boredom.

Then, one day, he asked his jailer if he might be allowed the privilege of reading something frivolous, say a detective story. The petition was granted. So Mr. Wright began to read detective and mystery novels by the score. One gathers that he was fascinated, but part of the fascination was that of repulsion—not so much that he looked down his patrician nose at the murder mystery, but because the bulk of them were so badly written, plotted, etc. (At this time, one of the most popular and prolific detective story writers was Arthur B. Reeve, creator of Craig Kennedy. In 1930, Reeve would be honorary editor of Hugo Gernsback's *SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY*.)

What saved Wright from horrible death from boredom was his very subtle sense of humor. Still forbidden to get back to serious writing in his scholarly specialty, he decided to write a murder mystery novel himself—but a most decidedly different

one: it would be a burlesque, but done in a perfectly straight manner--no slapstick, no gags. On the surface, this would be as earnest and intellectually interesting a performance as the author could prepare, and the satire would be such as to bring a grin of quiet amusement to the faces of discerning readers, not to induce belly-laugh.

Thus it was that, in 1926, Scribners published *The Benson Murder Case*, introducing Philo Vance.

I have a feeling that, in the article, Wright said he had enjoyed Sherlock Holmes in his younger days. At any rate, the pseudonym, S. S. Van Dine, is the Watson of the series, and all the Philo Vance novels are told in the first person. But right here, we get one of the unique features of the series: Philo Vance is the first fictional detective in a series of novels (and perhaps the only one) to be written about under an alias. Van Dine tells us, in the introduction to *The Benson Murder Case*, that while District Attorney F. X. Markham has the credit for a smaller number of unsolved crimes during his term of office than any of his predecessors, "he was only an instrument in many of his most famous cases."

He continues: "The man who actually solved them and supplied the evidence for their prosecution was in no way connected with the city's administration and never once came into the public eye.

"At that time I happened to be both legal advisor and personal friend of this other man, and it was thus that the strange and amazing facts of the situation became known to me. But not until recently have

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I been at liberty to make them public. Even now I am not permitted to divulge the man's name, and for that reason I have chosen, arbitrarily, to refer to him throughout these *ex officio* reports as Philo Vance." And he notes that, even with his care in disguising his friend, it might well be that persons who know the actual "Philo Vance" will recognize him, so all are earnestly exhorted to keep the secret.

An interesting sideline here, which is just a small part of the over-all verisimilitude you will find in the series: Van Dine, searching for a pseudonym for his friend does what most people are likely to do when choosing an alias—he hits upon a name that is not too dissimilar to his own: Van Dine-Vance. (At times it bothered me, even upon first reading, that Vance always called his Watson "Van".)

The date being . . . ? Van Dine has been as tricky as Watson, with all the outward appearance of candor and an attention to detail and consistency which was often beyond the good doctor. Scribner's published *The Benson Murder Case* in 1926, so this gives us one cut-off point; knowing publishers' normal habits, one must assume that the manuscript was delivered no later than early that year—and more likely the previous year. Six months between delivery and publication can be considered a minimum and a year is certainly more usual. Van Dine obtained Vance's permission to write up and publish the cases after District Attorney Markham had been defeated for re-election (due to his opponents' skill in juggling matters so that the ticket was

hopelessly split) and Vance himself had gone off to Italy to live.

Markham himself "had been elected district attorney of New York County on the Independent Reform Ticket during one of the city's periodical reactions against Tammany Hall." All the cases take place in New York County (and most of them centered about the City) during a four year period, at the outside. But at the heading of the chapter one of *The Benson Murder Case*, we find: "Friday, June 14: 8:30 A.M."

But the first year prior to 1926 when June 14th falls on a Friday is 1918—and that is just too early! There is no indication in the novel that the Great War is still going on. Yet, the sequence of events in the story require the Friday opening, and it has to be Spring, middle or late. However, May 14th fell on a Friday in 1920, and the period 1920-1924 seems to work for the series. If a District Attorney for New York County was elected in 1919, all is well; if in 1918, there's still a possibility, although the eleven cases would then have to be squeezed into a three-year compass.

Philo Vance is not an amateur detective prior to this Friday morning, when Markham calls on him to announce that Alvin Benson, well-known Wall Street broker, has been murdered. Markham says:

" . . . 'I'm on my way to Benson's. Do you care to come along? You asked for the experience, and I dropped in to keep my promise.'

"I then recalled that several weeks before at the Stuyvesant Club, when the subject of the prevalent homicides in New York was being dis-

(Turn to Page 121)

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# The Dogs Of Doctor Dwann

by Edmond Hamilton

(author of *The Three from the Tomb*)

"SO YOU'VE TAKEN THE COTTAGE up by Doctor Dwann's place?" said the elderly storekeeper as he wrapped my purchases, that day in 1932. "Settling here or just a visitor?"

"Just a visitor for the summer," I told him. "My doctor ordered me up to these Adirondack hills for a rest."

"Well, it ain't my idea of a place for a rest," said the storekeeper emphatically, "back up in the hills where your cottage is."

He looked about the little village store, empty except for ourselves, and then leaned closer, his gray-whiskered face wearing a sharp, intent

Why did the storekeeper ask Jameson, a newcomer to this Adirondack village, if he had heard any *queer* barking sounds?

expression. "Did you hear any dogs barking up there last night?" he asked. "Any *queer* barking?"

"Why, I did hear some dogs barking off in the hills," I said. "I didn't notice anything queer about it."

"You will if you stay up there," he predicted. "People around Nottville here are talking about those dogs barking and about what one fellow says he saw back in the hills one night. People are saying that that Doctor Dwann and the other fellow, Bowman . . ."

"What are people saying about me and Bowman, Farliss?" broke in a voice behind me.

I turned quickly. Unheard by either Farliss, the storekeeper, or myself, a man had entered the little store. This Doctor Dwann, as he had announced himself, was a man of forty or more with a thickset, powerful figure. He had black eyes and close-cropped black hair, his nose hooked and his mouth square and strong.

He was regarding Farliss and myself with a pleasant smile, though I thought I detected in it a hint of amusement at the storekeeper's discomfiture. For the latter had jumped at the sudden interruption and was now facing Doctor Dwann with a certain sullenness.

"What are they saying about me and Bowman?" Doctor Dwann repeated, and as Farliss made no answer, turned to me. "I hope Farliss hasn't been traducing us to our new neighbor. You *are* our new neighbor, aren't you, the Mr. Jameson who rented the Rand cottage?"

"I'm Walton Jameson, yes," I said, extending my hand. "Farliss was only telling me that he didn't think the hills back up there very suitable for a rest such as I'm taking."

"Why not, Farliss?" asked Dwann of the storekeeper. "As one of Nottville's chief merchants you should be praising the neighborhood's attractions rather than dispraising them."

"Just said I don't think those west hills are a good place for a rest, and I don't," Farliss said doggedly. He added pointedly, "You wanted to get something, doctor?"

"Meat, bread, and other of the necessities of animal existence," Doctor Dwann said, handing him a list. "Bowman was too busy to come down today and I had to do it."

As I nodded to him and started out the door he stopped me. "Don't go, Mr. Jameson. I'm driving back up to our place in a few minutes and as the road goes right past your cottage I can drop you off there."

I thanked him and waited. In a short time Farliss had ready Doctor Dwann's large packages of meat and smaller parcels of other foods.

Doctor Dwann placed them in the back of his touring-car and then, with the storekeeper looking after us from his door, we drove off down Nottville's single street. At the end of the village Dwann turned west over the bridge across the narrow Reed River, and the car started its climb into the western hills.

They loomed before us, green range on range of forest-clad heights, each range out-topped by the one beyond. In the nearer hills we could see the compact white buildings of farms gleaming here and there in the morning sunshine, but farther westward only forest appeared to cover the slopes and crests.

Doctor Dwann gestured widely as he drove up the steep and narrow dirt roads. "A fine region, Mr. Jameson. I hope Farliss hasn't spoiled your stay in it with his talk."

"No, he was just telling me of some queer barkings of dogs heard back in these hills, and that's hardly enough to make me leave," I said smiling.

Doctor Dwann's face, though, became suddenly serious, irritated. "So that's what Farliss was saying to you. And he was about to tell you, no doubt, that Bowman and I . . ."

He broke off. "But this is becoming ridiculous! If Farliss and the rest of the people around Nottville don't stop their silly talk I'll see that they're made to do so!"

"What's it all about?" I asked him perplexedly.

"It's a mess of rumors set going by those yokels who haven't intelligence enough to appreciate a rational explanation," Dwann said forcibly. "The sum of them is, Mr. Jameson, that I and my colleague, Doctor Bowman, are engaged in some sort of dark scientific horrors back in our place.

"You see, Bowman and I chose these hills for our zoological research station mainly because we'd have plenty of room and yet be more or less secluded from curiosity-seekers. We had our building put up back on one of these hills almost two years ago. Our work is research into animal intelligence, defining its factors, measuring its limits, testing capacity to learn, and the like. We've worked with dogs, police-dogs, as the most accessible and easily handled of animal subjects.

"Well, our experiments are perfectly comprehensible and normal, but the natives around here prefer to believe that we are engaged in some hideous kind of canine research—just because we won't let them ramble through our place at will! They've spread rumors of all kinds of strange

dogs or dog-like beasts seen or heard around our place at night, and every stray dog that yelps back in these hills is set down as more evidence of our unholy activities."

"So that's what Farliss meant when he asked me if I'd heard any queer barking," I said, and Dwann nodded.

"Yes, since your cottage is on the hill next to our hill, and you'd be in a better position to hear what we were up to."

"It's all rather ridiculous," I admitted. "I hope it doesn't hamper your work any."

He shrugged. "Bowman and I pay little attention to them. But it is rather annoying to find them telling this nonsense to strangers down in Nottville."

"But here's your cottage," he added. "Our place is on the next hill, as I said. Perhaps you can glimpse it."

We had wound up through the steep hairpin turns of the dirt road to the forested hill-top where my little cottage perched.

Looking across the deep valley that separated me from the crest of the higher range of hills a mile or two westward, I could indeed make out the gray mass of a building surrounded by a high wall and half hidden amid the trees.

Doctor Dwann handed out my packages. "I'll be seeing you soon, Mr. Jameson," he said cordially. "Bowman and I are so busy we have no visitors, but I can stop in on my way to the village."

"Please do," I invited. "And I'll be glad to meet your colleague also."

Doctor Dwann drove off, his car moving down from my hill-crest into the next valley, then climbing the steep slope of the next hill. I went inside my cottage with the mental note that Dwann and Bowman might give me some intellectual contacts which I evidently could not expect from the suspicious and rumor-ridden natives.

The rumors Doctor Dwann had told me of recurred to my mind that night. I had finished the simple supper I had cooked for myself, and had retired to the porch of my little cottage to smoke and watch darkness dropping over the humbled hills north and westward. Night's blackness was complete by the time I rose to go in.

Stepping to knock the ashes from my pipe, I heard suddenly through the night a sound that for a moment held me motionless. It was a dog's howl, a long barking cry that came from the hills northwestward and that was followed in a moment by several such cries, a prolonged barking chorus.

There was something in those barking outcries that held me on the porch in the darkness, listening. They were certainly the cries of dogs, swift yelping barks followed by long howls, yet there was something un-doglike about them—an unusual deepness of pitch and huskiness of tone. They made me remember at once what Farliss had told me of "queer" barking.

Then as the howls came again I told myself that I was letting Farliss' notions affect my hearing, and went inside. By the time I had lit my lamp and settled down beside it with my book, I had dismissed the barking from mind.

I had been reading for more than a half-hour, I think, when I was aroused from my absorption by a loud burst of the barking that seemed to come from close outside my cottage. As I looked up, a little startled, the howls were repeated. This time I could not doubt that there was something quite unusual in the deepness and huskiness of those canine outcries.

I rose from my chair, intending to go to the door and listen. But before I reached the door I stopped suddenly. Without warning other than a sound of quick-running feet outside, there had appeared suddenly at the window beside the door the heads of two great dogs who were looking in at me.

Their heads were very clear in the light of my lamp. Pointed brown muzzles as of large police-dogs they were, red tongues hanging from between their gleaming white teeth in a grin, their green-lit eyes staring directly in at me as I stood looking at them.

The thought foremost in my mind as I met the two dogs' gaze was that they must be dogs of very large size indeed, since the window was as high as my own head and I assumed that they were reared up against it outside. For perhaps two full minutes I stood without moving and met the gaze of the two dogs.

Then with an ejaculation I moved toward the window through which the two dog-faces looked. At once they vanished from sight and there was a sound of running feet outside and two husky howls. These were answered by two or three others and then with some little relief I heard the barking cries of all of the beasts receding southward.

I found to my surprise that I was trembling a little. The appearance of the two dogs' heads at my window had been so sudden, and there had been something so striking in their fixed gaze at me, that my nerves had been affected. I went to the door and looked out into the soft black night. From southward came the husky barking chorus.

My gaze, as I turned to re-enter the cottage, happened to strike the ground outside the window by the door. Suddenly I was tense, staring. The ground was illuminated by light that spilled through the window. It was black earth soft from recent rains, bearing imprints like wax. But there were in it no imprints at all of the paws of the two police-dogs who a moment before had peered in at me!

Instead, newly made in the soft black earth and as plain to the sight as day, were the tracks of two pairs of *bare human feet!* These tracks came toward the window and departed, and the impressions at the window had their toes pointed toward it and were deeper sunken, for all the world as *though two men had been looking in my window a moment before instead of two dogs!*

I stared at the tracks dazedly, uncomprehending. I could see not a single dog-track on all the ground around my cottage, only the tracks of bare human feet. Then the full strangeness of the thing smote me. Dogs that left human tracks instead of canine ones! Dogs whose barking sounded strange and un-doglike! Were these, then, the dogs that the people of the region feared?

## 2

DOGS THAT LEFT HUMAN TRACKS! For a space of time that must have measured minutes I stood outside my cottage, the light from its window alone dispelling the brooding darkness of night about me, and tried to explain to myself this astounding thing. What, indeed, could explain rationally this leaving of clear human footprints by dogs?

It came to me that I might have, in the uncertain light from the window, mistaken footprints of my own and missed seeing the ordinary paw-tracks of the dogs. With this thought in mind, I lit matches and bent to examine the soft ground around the cottage more closely.

The little flares of the matches disclosed even more clearly what I already seen. There were no dog-tracks anywhere in the soft ground around the cottage. Instead there were, clear and unmistakable, the tracks of bare human feet. Thus they could not be my footprints or those of any one I knew, since neither I nor any one I knew of had been walking around the cottage with feet bare.

Two pairs of these bare feet, as I had already seen, had approached from the road and had left their impressions by the window. I followed their trail now away from the window and found that a hundred feet

south of the cottage they were joined by two other similar sets of bare-footed human footprints, all four trending southward.

And as I stared at these freshly made human footprints, by the light of my matches, I heard again from southward the long, husky howls of dogs. I stood listening until the match I held burned down to my fingers, making me drop it hastily.

I went back to the front of my cottage and stood in front of its lamp-lit window, listening. Soon there came again from the night-shrouded hills southward the barking chorus. This time, listening intently, I thought I could distinguish in it at least four different dogs howling.

What could it all mean, I asked myself? Four or five dogs were abroad in the hills, that was plain, running and yelping as dogs will often do in forest country by night. They had neared my cottage and two of them had even reared at my window to look in at me. Then the two had gone on with the others, were still running in the wooded hills. All was clear except the one thing—why did these dogs leave human footprints?

Could it be the work of practical jokers? No, for the two dog-heads I had seen in my window had been real and living, heads of police-dogs with eyes green-lit and red tongues hanging from between white teeth. And it would take more than a joke to set going the whispered rumors and fears that Farliss, the storekeeper down in Nottville, had told me were abroad in the section.

Farliss? I remembered abruptly that the whiskered storekeeper when he had told me about the queer barking heard back in the hills, and the queer stories going about, had been about to connect these things with Doctor Dwann and Bowman when he had been interrupted by Dwann's entrance. What had Farliss been about to tell me?

But now I remembered too that Doctor Dwann himself, during our ride up into the hills that morning from Nottville, had explained to me that because he and Bowman were engaged in zoological research on dog-intelligence, the natives of the region connected them with the queer dog-phenomena in the hills. Dwann, telling me this frankly, had apparently not believed for a moment that there was anything unusual going on.

But I now knew better. Certainly nothing could be more unusual than this leaving of human footprints by dogs. What would Dwann make of that, I wondered, when he knew? Suddenly I resolved to go, at once, and tell Dwann about it. He and Bowman might be able to explain, I thought,

and so much had the astounding thing unsettled my thoughts that a rational explanation of it was my paramount and pressing need.

It would take but twenty minutes or so to walk over to Dwann's place on the next hilltop, I told myself. Staring in that direction, indeed, I could make out that next range of hills indistinctly in the starlight, though the valley that lay between me and it was shrouded in deep shadow.

I went into my cottage for my hat and stick, turned out my lamp, and came out again, closing my door. As I did so I heard again from southward the distant, husky baying of the dogs. The sound made me hesitate for a moment, but as it died away I grasped my stick more tightly and set off along the road.

The road was in the starlight a ribbon of misty white winding down over the wooded slope and through the dark forests of the valley up the next slope. In a moment I was swinging along down the slope. As I went downward I was able to see on the next hill's crest a spark of yellow light from Dwann's place. I walked steadily on.

It was a lonely walk, for the woods were dark and silent about me, only the hoot of an owl or cry of some other nightbird breaking the stillness. My footsteps rang unnaturally loud on the road. Then through the stillness came again from southward the deep, reverberating calls of the dog-pack.

Soon I reached the trough of the valley between the hills, and there it was very dark, for the starlight could not penetrate between the towering trees that loomed on either side of the road. I crossed the valley and started the steep climb up the next slope.

It was when I had been climbing this slope for a few minutes that the calls of the dog-pack came again, and this time more loudly. I did not believe at first that this was really the case, and stopped to listen. Standing on the starlit road, the dark woods silent on either side of me, I waited.

In a moment came the dog-cries again, deep and husky barking which I could not doubt this time was really louder and nearer. The dogs, it seemed, were circling back from the south into the valley behind and below me, and from their outcries I judged that they were moving fast.

Something of a chill came over me as I heard that canine chorus louder and closer. I grasped my stick more tightly and quickened my pace. Yet the slope was so steep that even to climb it at normal speed was an effort, and to make much haste would be exhausting.

I was well up the slope, however, moving steadily up the winding



road's turns. The howls of the dog-pack came now from the valley down behind me. I was just estimating that the dogs must be obliquely crossing the road down there, when there came up to me a sudden explosion of excited yelping cries. These changed quickly to long quavering howls that grew louder below me.

The dogs, having struck my track on the road, had changed direction and were coming after me up the road. Realization of that sank into me as I heard their howls several times in the next few minutes, each time coming from the road below me. And they were drawing closer.

The weirdness of the whole situation struck me and for the first time I felt fear. I knew that dogs that run thus in the country by night can often be dangerous animals, and in addition there clung to these particular dogs the mystery of the human tracks they had left outside my cottage—the mystery that was the reason for this journey of mine to Doctor Dwann's.

I moved more rapidly, counting on reaching Dwann's place before the dogs could come up to me.

Climbing the steep winding road thus with a haste that cost me much, I heard the dogs give tongue once or twice more, and then fall silent.

This made me think for a moment that they had given up the chase. Then it occurred to me that instead of following the road they might be cutting across its turns through the woods.

Hardly had this thought come to me when from somewhere in the woods to my right, a little behind me, came a loud howl. This startled me, not only from its nearness but because heard thus near the huskiness and deepness of the howl were very un-doglike.

Another howl came from the left, as though answering the first. At this evidence that the dogs were overtaking me and that some of them were running in the woods on either side of me, I broke into a run.

As I ran, panting for breath, I hoped each movement to reach the crest of the wooded hill and see Doctor Dwann's place before me. Now from either side and from close behind me also the barking howls came louder and exultant. The dogs were converging upon me and I could hear the crashing of their bodies in the woods on either side.

And as I ran up the road I seemed to glimpse in the dark woods about me the darker shapes of figures nearing me, running obliquely along the road. But these shapes crashing through the brush did not seem dog-shapes as I glimpsed them, but erect human-shapes!

For a moment it flashed through my mind that these were men, who,

for some reason, were hunting me with the dogs I had heard. But then occurred a thing that shattered this supposition and that seemed at the same moment to shatter my powers of thought. From these dark figures in the woods—*these human figures*—came the husky dog-howls I had been hearing!

The horror of that crashed through my brain even as I stumbled instinctively on up the road. Dogs that trailed me and that howled their hunting cries but seemed to have human shapes! Yes, and dogs that had left human footprints!

With a choking cry of horror I threw myself forward. I had reached the hill's crest and before me the woods gave way to a small clearing in which stood a wall-encircled gray building whose windows gleamed with yellow light. But as I staggered across the clearing toward the closed gate in the wall, I heard the dog-things crash from the woods behind and with loud howls spring across the clearing after me.

Before I could reach the gate their running feet were close behind me and their sound was not that of swift-pattering dog-feet but the heavier tread of human feet! They were directly behind, overtaking me, and as I saw that they would be on me before I reached the gate, I spun around with a cry, my stick raised.

For a moment I stood frozen, incapable of movement. The dog-things, four in number, were in fact but a few yards from me, and in the starlight that dimly illuminated the clearing I could see them plainly. That moment I stared, and then as the things leapt at me I screamed, and still screaming struck among them.

The four things were not dogs and neither were they men. They had the bodies of men, white and unclothed bodies. But on their shoulders were the heads of dogs! Pointed police-dog heads, with blazing eyes, white fangs and dark muzzles! Man bodies and dog-heads!

They were rushing at me, running upright like men but with dog-howls coming from the grinning jaws of their dogheads! They did not raise their hands, but snapped at me with their teeth! I struck among them with my stick, madly, insensately.

They gave back a little, snarling, and then made to rush at me again. But I had thrown myself against the gate in the wall, was beating crazily upon it.

"Dwann, let me in!" I screamed. "Dwann, for God's sake let me in!"

There were exclamations from inside the wall and then the gate swung inward. Doctor Dwann and a stocky younger man I guessed to be his

colleague Bowman stood in its opening, framed against the yellow light from the building inside. As I fell in against them I could not in my horror attain speech but gestured toward the four human-bodied dog-things behind me who again, with snapping snarls, were rushing at me.

I heard Doctor Dwann exclaim something and then, as he supported me, I saw Bowman run out to the four dogthings and utter a sharp command to them. At once their fierceness ebbed and they cringed and cowered around Bowman. I think that was the final touch to my horror, the sight of Bowman treating those dog-headed but human-bodied things as though they were ordinary dogs. I felt my senses leaving me.

I was aware that Dwann and Bowman were helping me inside the wall and into the building, into a yellow-lit room.

Voices were in my ears, Dwann's deep one and Bowman's sharper tones. I heard low barking outside. Then something fiery was poured down my throat.

My vision cleared. I sat in a comfortably furnished living-room, and Doctors Dwann and Bowman were bending over me, the former with a glass in his hand.

From outside came again one or two of the low, husky barks. I remembered everything when I heard that, and clutched Dwann's wrist.

"Dwann!" I cried. "What are those things? Those men with the heads of . . ." My voice failed me.

"Those things that chased you?" Dwann asked. He seemed intensely irritated, vexed. "Damn it, Jameson, why must you come walking this way at night and blunder into things that don't concern you?"

"It wasn't altogether his fault, I think," said Bowman to Dwann in a calmer tone. "They were tracking him, apparently."

"I want to know what they are!" I cried, my voice rising to a ragged scream. "You know—you saw them—dog-heads on the bodies of men! Dog-heads, yes, on human bodies, barking and chasing me!"

"And over at my cottage tonight! They looked in at my window and I, who saw only their dog-heads at the window, could not understand how they had left human footprints outside the window! I never dreamed of them being dog-heads on human bodies, and came over to tell you about the thing. Dwann, what are those unholy things?"

Dwann looked at Bowman, then at me. "They are just what you call them," he said. "Dog-heads on the bodies of men."

"But what made them?" I exclaimed. "What produced monsters like that?"

A sudden thought struck me with deeper horror and I looked wildly at Dwann and Bowman. "Dwann, it was you two! You said you were experimenting with dogs up here, and they said down in the village you were connected somehow with the queer dogs heard in the hills!

"You two made those monsters!" I was on my feet, shaking. "You made them and I saw you controlling them just now, commanding them! How — why — in God's name, did you do it?"

Dwann handed me the glass again. "Drink the rest of this," he said. I did, and the fiery liquid steadied me a little. "We'll have to tell him," Dwann said then, speaking to Bowman.

"If you do it'll be out," Bowman said levelly, his eyes holding the other's.

"Perhaps not," Dwann said. "Anyway, he has blundered onto it now. If you'd just kept away from here at night, Jameson!" he said with that irritation again.

He sat down in a chair beside me. "Jameson, you've projected yourself into something that Bowman and I have tried to keep secret," he said. "I'm going to explain it to you in the hope that when you understand you'll not disclose what you've learned."

"Tell me first," I said shakily, "what those dog-headed things were. I think I must be a little insane."

"You're not insane — they're real enough. Dwann said. He nodded to Bowman. "Bring them in, Stuart."

Before I could protest Bowman went out. I heard welcoming barks outside the house. In a moment he re-entered the room and with him came the four — things.

If the four had been horrible in the dim starlight, they were more so in the prosaic electric light of the living-room. Sick at heart, trembling violently, I gazed at them.

There bodies were the naked white bodies of full-grown men. One body was taller and better muscled, younger-looking, than the others. All four bodies were scratched in many places as though by briars and brush in the woods. All four stood quite erect and their arms hung loosely, unused at their sides.

Upon these four human bodies, just above the shoulders, the white human flesh of the lower neck merged suddenly into the hairy flesh of a dog's neck. The whole upper-necks, therefore, were dog-necks and had been fitted onto the human shoulders so that the dog's long pointed head was normally horizontal, eyes and muzzles pointed straight forward.

The heads were as I had seen two of them in my window, large police-dog heads. They breathed, their dog-mouths open in a grin with white fangs showing, tongues hanging out a little, and down in their human chests their human lungs were drawing in their breath! The four things, clustered around Bowman, nudged him with their human bodies as dogs will a master, looking about them with quick bright canine eyes.

They saw me and all four of the dog-men growled, husky, deep howls coming strangely and canine larynx, and they all moved toward me with fangs bared.

"Quiet!" snapped Bowman to them. They quieted at once, nudging Bowman ingratiatingly again. A sickness shook me as I saw.

"Here!" Doctor Dwann ordered, extending his hand.

The four dog-men trotted across the room to us. Their human bodies moved in short, shambling steps, their movements seeming not wholly co-ordinated. They rubbed against Doctor Dwann in turn.

"Speak!" Dwann ordered.

The dog-men opened their mouths and howled loudly.

"Play dead!" commanded Dwann, and then the four slumped to the floor and lay motionless on their backs.

"Paw!" ordered Dwann.

They sprang up and each extended an arm awkwardly as though offering a paw.

"Dwann, I can't stand this!" I said chokingly. "For God's sake don't . . ."

"All right—call them, Stuart," Dwann said, and at Bowman's command the four dog-men shambled back across the room, lay down in a corner. Bowman came over to Dwann and me then.

"Well, Jameson," said Doctor Dwann to me grimly, "do you still doubt whether the dog-men are real?"

"They're real enough," I said thickly. "But Dwann, what—how . . ."

"I'll explain what and how," Dwann said calmly. He sat back in his chair. "Jameson, did you ever hear of the experiments made in Moscow a few years ago by Brukhanenko and Chechulin with dog-heads?"

I shook my head. "Well, Brukhanenko and Chechulin were Russian biologists who conceived the idea that the head of a large animal like a dog might be kept living apart from its body. They succeeded in severing a dog's head completely from its body and keeping it living for some hours.

"They accomplished this by providing an artificial circulatory system

which kept up the circulation of prepared blood inside the dog's head, an artificial heart pumping the blood at a regular rate. The dog's head lived, could open and close its eyes and to some extent see, could bark or try to bark, and could even swallow food. These experiments made the names of Doctors S. S. Brukhanenko and S. I. Chechulin famous among biologists.

"Bowman and I," Doctor Dwann's eyes were kindling, "Bowman and I were at that time research zoologists in the Malcolm Foundation down at New York. We became interested in the Brukhanenko-Chechulin work and determined to go further with it. After some preliminary repetitions of the Russian experiments, we resolved to carry the work even further and transfer the head of one living animal to the body of another!

"We suggested this line of research to Doctor Ranley Jackson, head of our department at the Malcolm Foundation, asking his permission to go on with it. We pointed out what far-reaching biological and surgical implications such successful experiments would involve. But Jackson, damn him" — Dwann's eyes clouded with hate — "Jackson told us that the thing was too horrible and that he could never allow such research to be carried out in his department.

"But Bowman and I were so determined to go on with it that we decided to do so secretly. We did that, working under cover at the Foundation. But three of our fellow-workers in the department, Willetts and Baletti and Smith, found out what we were doing. They reported us at once to Doctor Jackson, and immediately Jackson had us ousted from the Foundation."

Doctor Dwann's face held bitter feeling at the memory, and I could see that in Bowman's stolid features too was hate.

"Jackson, with the aid and assistance of Willetts and Smith and Baletti, had us ousted without appeal. It didn't matter to them that Bowman and I were doing a work that might mean the opening up of a whole new line of zoological research; it didn't mean anything that it might revolutionize some of modern zoological science. All they could see in it was the horror that shocked their little minds.

"But Bowman and I wouldn't give the thing up. We resolved to go ahead and show Jackson and Willetts and the rest what we could achieve. We pooled our money and came up to this isolated hill region to establish our research station. Back here on this hilltop we had this building erected, with room for our laboratories and living-quarters, and a wall around it for further seclusion. Then we imported a dozen large police-dogs to start with and commenced work.

"Since then, for almost two years, Bowman and I have worked here. We tried first to transfer the head of one dog to the body of another, and keep it living. We failed; for we found that though we could keep dog-heads living by themselves, by means of an artificial heart and blood-stream, to join them to the living bodies of others and knit the several blood-vessels and vertebrae and tie the different nerves and fuse skin and tissues again, was beyond our powers.

"But we kept at it, having more and more police-dogs sent in. Gradually Bowman and I came to have greater and greater skill at the work, conquering our difficulties one by one. We developed a whole new technique to facilitate growing of one blood-vessel to another. We devised bone-building solutions to hasten the knitting of vertebrae. The nerves gave us most trouble, for unless we connected them correctly the head had no control over the body. But even that we conquered.

"We reached a point where we could perform the thing almost flawlessly, could sever the heads of two dogs and then interchange them, putting each head back onto the other's body instead of its own. So that the work we had meant to show Jackson and the rest we could do, we had succeeded in doing! We could transfer dog-heads from one dog-body to another at will!

"But by then Bowman and I had new objectives. We had debated whether or not it would be possible to put the heads of dogs onto the bodies of animals, of entirely different species, and still keep them living. Instead of stopping work, therefore, we decided to go on and see whether such a transfer as that would be possible.

"We decided to try placing dog-heads on the bodies of men. This choice was dictated not only by a sort of curiosity as to whether it would be possible, but also by the fact that if it were possible it would have a great effect in the field of surgery, leading perhaps to the placing of human heads on other bodies. But obviously we could not use human bodies for subjects as we had been using our police-dogs.

"Since Bowman and I had decided that if we placed a living dog-head on a newly dead but undamaged human body, both head and body would live, that gave us a way to secure human bodies for subjects. We prepared all things and then Bowman went down to the city. He waited until an accident brought into a hospital a man who had just died of a head injury, his body being undamaged. No one claimed his body and Bowman secured it, packed it carefully, and rushed it up here.

"Once it was here we worked swiftly. We removed the damaged human head, then swiftly took the living head from one of our police-dogs

and placed it on the human trunk. All our skill we used to knit its canine blood-vessels and vertebrae and nerves to the human ones, having made allowance beforehand for the differences between them, and also having made allowance chemically for the difference between human and canine blood. Then with the dog's head attached to the human body, we waited to see if it would live.

"It lived! When the anesthetic wore off, the dog's head still lived and re-animated the human body! And as time passed and the healing processes advanced, this dog-man, as we called him, was able more and more to move his human body and limbs. He moved them clumsily at first, due to the difference in head and body nerves, but quickly by aid of the reflex centers in his human body's spinal cord was able to walk and move as erectly as though wholly a man.

"But he was a dog still in mind! His dog-head, with its dog-brain, still held its canine intelligence even though it controlled now a human body. He was a dog with a human body! He barked, the dog-larynx in his neck retained, but his human lungs making his bark deeper and huskier. He obeyed all our commands as before, but now ran about with human body erect. A dog-man, a dog-head and mind with human body!

"We kept him here, and in the next months Bowman and I made more like him, three dog-men whose human bodies we procured from the city as we had the first. These four dog-men we kept inside here by day, but since they were in mind dogs still and must have exercise, we let them run outside at night. They always come back before morning, as any dog would. For though dog-men now, in mind and actions they are as much dogs as ever they were!"

## 3

DWANN LOOKED CALMLY AT ME as he stopped. Bowman's eyes were on me also, but instead of the two men I was looking at the four dog-men in the room's corner. They were lying dozing, their human bodies sprawled carelessly and their dog-heads flat on the floor.

"Dwann," I said sickly, "your Doctor Jackson was right when he forbade your experiments. These monsters you've made—grotesque—terrible . . ."

"That attitude is to be expected on your part, Jameson," Doctor Dwann said, "but is it reasonable? Think, Jameson," he said forcefully, "there has never yet been a major advance in biological science that did not seem at first to the uninitiated unnatural and unholy. Yet this ad-



vance is as great as any ever made, as we tried to show to Jackson and to Willetts and Smith and Baletti."

"But is it advance at all?" I asked. "Dwann, what possible good can it do to make creatures like these?"

Dwann waved his hand impatiently. "These creatures are not the object of our experiments! They're only a sort of by-product—our real object as in any scientific experiment was the disclosure of new truths, the attainment of new technique that could be used for practical purposes."

"You wouldn't think it terrible," Bowman told me, "if a dog's glands or liver, for instance, were transferred into a human body. Why should it be terrible when a dog's head is used instead?"

"Bowman's right," Dwann said. "The difference is only in degree. That is what Jackson and the rest could not see."

I looked numbly from Bowman and from him to the dog-men again. Their very presence in the room dominated all my thinking with unreasoning horror, and I could not take my fascinated eyes long from them. I stared at the line on their necks where white human flesh ended and hairy dog-flesh began.

One of the things woke and stretched as I stared, extending his human arms as though they were paws, his dog-mouth yawning and showing its white canine teeth. His arm in stretching touched the dog-man nearest him, and the other woke and snapped crossly at him with sudden gleam of white dog-teeth.

"Dwann, where will this horror end?" I asked. "How many more things like that will you make?"

"No more," Dwann said. "Bowman and I have accomplished almost all we can expect to along this line, though we'd still like to test some other methods. But we don't want to have to leave here before we are completely through, and that is why we've kept it all secret and why I'm asking you to continue to keep it secret.

"You, Jameson, are an intelligent man, and even though you are horrified by this thing you can appreciate what value it may some day have for science. But the natives about here would simply see the horror of it and would destroy this place."

"I won't say anything," I said unsteadily. "In fact, I'm not even going to stay in this region another day, Dwann."

"That would perhaps be best," Doctor Dwann said, "though of course I leave that to you."

"And to think," I said weakly, "that I came up here to give my nerves a rest!"

We had risen, and now the dog-men too were rising. They came shuffling toward us, their dog-heads on a level with my own, carried as they were by the erect human bodies.

Wary of Dwann and Bowman beside me, yet they thrust their muzzles near my own head, sniffing at me as dogs will at a person, their green-lit eyes very close to my own. From them came again deep growls.

"Back!" Bowman said sharply, and the dog-men shuffled hastily back.

"They'll not bother you, Jameson," Dwann said. "Pay no attention to them."

But I had sunk weakly into a chair, without strength to stand, so shaken in body and mind was I by what I had seen this night.

Dwann looked sharply at me. "Jameson, you'll never make it back to your cottage in your present condition," he said. "You'd better stay here for the night."

Bowman nodded agreement. "If anything happened to you there'd be an investigation, which Dwann and I don't want."

"Stay here?" I said. "With those—things?"

"They'll be locked up tightly, don't worry, and won't bother you. And there's an extra bedroom for you."

I hesitated. The horror of the homeward walk through the darkness of the hills loomed even greater in my mind than my horror of the four dog-men before me. "I'll stay," I said unsteadily, "if you're sure these things will be locked up."

"You can come and see us lock them up now," Doctor Dwann said. "Bring them along, Bowman."

He led me from the living-room into a hall of some length that ran back into the oblong building. There were seven or eight doors along it, on either side. Bowman followed Dwann and me, whistling the four dog-men after us. I heard their bare feet thudding on the floor.

Bowman opened one of the doors and disclosed a small kennel-like room hardly wider than the door. He ordered one of the dog-men into it and the thing walked reluctantly inside, curled up its human body on a mat in the corner. Bowman closed and locked the door.

"We put them in separate cells like this," Doctor Dwann explained, "so that they won't get to fighting among themselves and ruin our specimens."

Bowman ordered the other three dog-men into the next three little cells, and I felt relief as he locked their doors.

"So there you are," Dwann said. "You needn't fear the dog-men disturbing your sleep."

"What's in the other cells?" I asked, pointing to the remaining doors along the hall.

For answer Dwann opened one and I saw inside it a large police-dog—not one of the monstrous dog-men with human bodies, but a normal dog.

"Dogs we use for subjects we keep in some of the cells," Doctor Dwann explained. "The others are empty."

I went with Bowman and him on down the hall and around a turn at its end. Dwann opened a door to show me a large white-tiled laboratory elaborately fitted with mechanisms and instruments of metal and glass. Then he went back to another door which when opened disclosed a small but neat bedroom.

"Bowman and I have the rooms just across the hall," he told me, "so you'll be all right here. Just forget our scientific horrors and go to sleep."

"I'll try," I said. With that he and Bowman left me and closed the door.

Once in bed, I lay awake in the darkness for a long time, my thoughts chaotic. The horror of what I had experienced still shook my mind.

Dwann and Bowman had explained their work well enough and I could see that, as they said, their work, however horrible, might mean a tremendous advance in scientific knowledge. But no reasoning of this kind could overcome the horror I still felt of the dog-men. I could not see how even Dwann and Bowman could be insensible to that horror.

Dog-men—dog-heads on human bodies—dog-brains animating the bodies of men. Could any advance in scientific knowledge justify the creation of such monsters as this, who had peered in at my window and who had trailed and pursued me in the darkness?

At the thought that I lay under the same roof with the creatures, I shuddered. Yet they were, in fact, but dogs—no more to be feared than any dogs. Yet I did fear them, deeply, terribly. I listened as I lay there for any sound that might betray their presence, but there was none. Dwann and Bowman retired—I heard their doors closing.

Gradually I drifted into a troubled sleep, half waking each time remembrance of that horror roused my brain. I slipped more deeply back into sleep each time, though. So deeply I sank into darkness that soon I did not even half wake, sleeping completely. Then suddenly with a

jerk I found myself sitting bolt upright in the darkness, trembling violently.

I had been dreaming of an uncouth-headed monster creeping toward me with soft shuffling sound. And now even as I told myself that it was but my dream, I became aware that from across the room there was coming to my ear just such a soft sound. The door of my room was slowly opening.

In a fixed terror I sat there, incapable of movement, as the door slowly opened. The only light in the room was a small square of moonlight on the floor, that slanted in from the window. Yet I was aware by the sound that the door was opening and was aware a moment later that some one, something, was entering the room.

I sat unable to move or to utter a sound. Dwann and Bowman had locked up the dog-men. Yet I felt, from the soft sounds I heard, that it was no human who was entering the room. I could hear the sound of light, stealthy feet crossing the room toward me. Then as I gathered my numbed strength to act, the form in the darkness, or part of it, moved into the square of moonlight on the floor.

It was a man's head that moved into the square of light. The head was but a few feet above the floor, so that, although his body was hidden in the darkness, I judged this man must be crawling on hands and knees. He was looking up at me and I saw that his head was an elderly one, gray-haired, his eyes tense and his face unshaven.

He saw me in the darkness as I sat there staring down at him. His lips moved.

"Quiet!" he whispered. His voice was low, feeble, sibilant. "For God's sake don't make a sound!"

"Who are you?" I whispered, the spell broken. "What's the matter?"

"You're the man who came here tonight with dog-men after you?" he said tensely. "The man Dwann and Bowman were talking to?"

I nodded with an effort. "Walton Jameson, But who are you?"

"I'm Jackson— Doctor Ranley Jackson," he said.

"Jackson?" My mind was searching my memory for the connotations that name aroused. "Jackson? The Doctor Jackson who Dwann and Bowman said was their superior at the Malcolm Foundation?"

"Yes!" he whispered. "Jameson, Dwann and Bowman have all four of us here— Willets and Baletti and Smith and I!"

"But Dwann and Bowman said they hated you for obstructing their work," I whispered bewilderedly. "All four of you."

"They do hate us," Jackson said. "They got us up here by a ruse

months ago, asking us to come up and see their new work. And they've kept us here ever since! You've got to help us!"

My mind was still hardly working but I slipped out of bed and into my clothes.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

Jackson had stayed where he was, his head in the moonlight but his body back in the darkness.

"I want you to help me get Smith and Baletti and Willetts out!" he whispered. "They're locked in separate cells like those of the dog-men. I found a key Bowman dropped yesterday in my cell and got out with it after working a long time—you can use it to let the others out quickly!"

"Why didn't you let them out yourself?" I asked. "If you have the key . . ."

For answer Jackson bent his head to the floor and with his mouth picked up a key which I now saw he had dropped there when he first spoke to me.

"I have to use the key like this—with my mouth!" he said. "It would take too long, but you can do it quickly."

"But why not use your hands to do it?" I asked bewilderedly.

Jackson's gray face was ghastly. "This is why," he said. "This is what Dwann and Bowman have made of Baletti and Willetts and Smith and me."

He moved forward, so that his body as well as his head was in the revealing square of moonlight. I stared down at him, at first thinking my eyes deceived me, then shaken by a horror ten times greater than which the dog-men had inspired in me.

For the head of Jackson was not set on any human body but on the hairy body of a large dog! The neck was set on the dog's shoulders so that the human head was upright. This was a reversal of the dog-men. Jackson and the other three were man-dogs, human heads upon dog-bodies!

I stared at Jackson's ghastly face and dog-body as he stood before me, and then as I thought of the others, of Smith and Willetts and Baletti—human heads on dog-bodies also, human minds ruling canine forms—my horror found voice in scream after choking scream.



illustration by T. Wyatt Nelson

horror-clouded and misty memory. I know that as I screamed there were sounds from elsewhere in the building, running feet and quick voices. Then as Jackson turned desperately, lights flashed on in the hall and Bowman appeared in the doorway of my room, his face crimson and a pistol in his hand.

Jackson leapt at him, his canine body and human head hurtling across the room toward Bowman like a brown thunderbolt. But before he reached Bowman the other had fired twice and Jackson fell to the floor and lay with canine body prone, stirring slightly.

Dwann burst into the room, black eyes sweeping the scene and his face forbidding. With a quick glance he took in the scene from the man-dog lying on the floor to me standing petrified with horror.

"Quick, secure him!" Dwann snapped to Bowman. "He mustn't get away now!"

Before I could recover enough to resist they had seized me and in a moment had bound my hands.

"Stay here with him," Dwann ordered Bowman. "I'll see if any of the rest have escaped."

He went out and down the hall, pistol in hand. In a moment he returned. "Smith and Willetts and Baletti are safe—Jackson was the only one to escape."

"What about Jameson?" Bowman asked, his own pistol still covering me.

Dwann's black eyes were hard as jet. "We'll take him into the laboratory," he said. "Keep him covered."

Holding to me, their pistols against me, they half lifted me out of the room into the hall. As I looked back numbly I saw Jackson's human-headed dog-body moving again, crawling across the floor to where lay the key he had dropped. But Dwann and Bowman, not seeing, were thrusting me into the laboratory.

Dwann snapped on lights, closed shutters, as calmly as though nothing unusual had happened. He came back then to where Bowman held me. His face was utterly calm, merciless.

"Jameson, you've discovered our secret and know that we've made not only dog-men but man-dogs," he said. "You know the truth now, that it wasn't dead human bodies we used in our experiments but living ones, the bodies of the four who did most to obstruct our work, Jackson and Willetts and the other two.

"We put living dog-heads upon their living bodies, and put their heads on living dog-bodies. If you had thought you'd have seen that we had to have living human bodies and not dead ones. What humans were we to use? Why should we use innocent people who had done us no harm, when those four had done us much harm and done the cause of scientific knowledge much harm also? So we got the four of them up here; drugged them and made man-dogs of them and dog-men of four of our dogs, by interchanging their heads and bodies.

"We did so in the cause of scientific knowledge." There was a ring of sincerity in Dwann's voice. "We know, Bowman and I, that the world would condemn us as monsters ourselves to have made such monsters, but we are willing to incur not only the world's condemnation but the condemnation of ourselves, even, to further our work."

"But, Dwann, what about me?" I asked hoarsely. "I want to go—for God's sake let me out of here!"

"Jameson, we can't let you go," Dwann said. "You know all we've done here and you'll surely tell it if we let you free. When you saw only the dog-men you would have kept silent and we were willing to let you go, but now we dare not."

"But what are you going to do with me then?" I cried. "Kill me?"

There was a strange regard, a pity almost, in Dwann's fathomless black eyes. "Jameson," he said, "Bowman and I have wanted to make one more transference of dog and human heads to test some methods we've devised since our last transferences. We're not going to kill you but we're going to test those methods on you."

"You're going to put my head on a dog's body like Jackson and the rest?—a dog's head on my body?—no!" I screamed. "No, you can't, you daren't!"

I struggled, struck with my bound hands, but Bowman held me helpless.

"Jameson, believe that I'm sorry for you," said Dwann. "I know that in doing this Bowman and I are acting the part of fiends, but fiends or not, we're going on with our work until it's complete to the last iota."

"But you daren't!" I cried again. "They'll discover what you've done here—you'll be torn to pieces for this . . ."

Dwann stepped to the laboratory wall and opened a small steel door in it. Inside I saw a plunger-switch.

"They'll never discover what's gone on here," Dwann told me. "This switch connects with a half-ton of dynamite under this building. When Bowman and I finish our work here we'll push this time-switch and in three minutes this place, and all the dog-men and men-dogs in it, will be destroyed. Before we do that, we'll finish our work. You're part of that work now, Jameson. And to save you the tortures of anticipation we're going to go ahead with our work on you now."

Dazed, unable to resist, I felt myself lifted to the smooth surface of an operating-table, one of two standing side by side. I was bound tightly to it by Dwann, while Bowman wheeled huge and complicated mechanisms to the two tables, intricate pumps connecting with rubber tubing, flat containers of thick solutions, mechanical and chemical revivification apparatus.

"All ready, Bowman—get one of the dogs," Dwann ordered. "The one from cell 4."



"Dwann, for the love of God . . ." I choked, as Bowman went to the laboratory door.

But before Bowman reached the door it was thrust open from the hall outside. Dwann and Bowman cried out.

In the door, bleeding from his two bullet-wounds and scarce able to stand, staggered the awful figure of the man-dog Jackson, the dog-body that bore Jackson's head!

Behind him were three other dog-bodied shapes with human heads! Three other man-dogs! Willetts and Baletti and Smith! Jackson had summoned enough strength to free them and now they looked into the laboratory at Dwann and Bowman with eyes blazing, terrible.

Dwann tried to get out the pistol in his pocket, but the three man-dogs had sprung. Jackson had sunk to the floor, but Willetts and Baletti and Smith, human heads on canine bodies, knocked Dwann and Bowman down by the sheer weight of their spring, and then were tearing at them with their sharp dog-claws, seeking with human teeth their throats.

Helpless on the operating-table I heard the terrible struggle, the cries of Dwann and Bowman, the sibilant, beast-like snarls of Willetts and the other two man-dogs. Dwann was down with the man-dog Baletti at his throat, Bowman fighting to escape the other two and get to his feet, striking madly at the man-dogs.

Then with a gurgling sigh Bowman collapsed across the limp body of the man-dog Smith. He had strangled Smith but his own throat was torn out. Dwann lay dead a little distance from him with his own throat crimson. Jackson lay still at the door and Baletti was walking dazedly about the room, but the man-dog Willetts stumbled across the room toward me.

He reared beside me, his sharp claws tearing at my bonds. I felt myself free, and staggered from the table to the laboratory floor. Willetts, staggering with me across the laboratory, was a terrible sight with his dog-body torn and bloody and his human face white and awful. He reared up against the wall by the door, toward the little steel door in the wall.

He turned his human head toward me. "Get—out!" he whispered gaspingly. "Quick . . ."

"But you?—the others?" I cried weakly.

For answer his paw ripped open the little steel door, grasped the plunger of the dynamite time-switch inside, pushed it down.

"Get—out—get—out . . ."

With mind rapidly crumbling from the repeated horrors to which it had been subjected, I stumbled out of the laboratory, down the hall, out of the house and through the gate in the wall, into the darkness.

Halfway across the clearing outside I stumbled and then felt my legs giving under me. But at that moment a terrific explosion split the night behind me, cleaving the darkness with a sword of fire as man-dogs and dog-men and those who had made them were swept by flaming destruction. Then came the duller crash of the building's encircling wall as it fell inward. And even at that moment I too fell, onto the friendly earth, clutching with unfeeling hands at the cold and dew-wet grass.

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## The Reckoning

As I mention in *The Cauldron*, our Spring issue was, in some respects, a very unusual one as each of the five stories, at one time or another was either in first place, or neck and neck with another story for first place. This has never happened before with any other issue of SMS, or of our companion publication, *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*.

The winning story was the only one to shift in and out of first—that is, to regain first place after having lost it for a time; none of the others achieved this—once they fell behind, they stayed behind whichever front runner displaced them.

One reader marks the Simon Ark story with an "X", another says he cannot dig my hang-up on this character; two other readers mark the story "outstanding", and others put it in first place. That, my friends, is why we continue to use Simon Ark stories—because those who enjoy him outnumber those who do not. But because a sizeable fraction do not, he does not appear as often as does Jules de Grandin, whose detractors are a very small fraction compared to those who want to see him more often.

Here's how you finally rated issue #12: (1) *The City of the Blind*, Murray Leinster; (2) *Sword for a Sinner*, Edward D. Hoch; (3) a three-way tie: *The Woman with the Velvet Collar*, Gaston Leroux; *The Reaper's Image*, Stephen King, and *Tiger*, Bassett Morgan.

# The Parasite

*by Dorothy Norman Cooke*

HERMIE GOLD WAS EXACTLY what his name implied: a purloiner of anything and everything that looked, felt, or smelled like gold. Factually, that was what attracted him to the Golden Doubloon. The decor dazzled him; consequently he made it the scene of his nightly repast of three beers and a salami sandwich on pumpernickel.

He was a small-statured man, given way more to width than height, but regardless of the opinion that all such paunchy men were overflowing with human kindness and joviality, Hermie was a lonely man. When he had finished his second beer he always surveyed the Golden Doubloon for a likely prospect.

The mealy-faced man at the end of the bar had caused him much thought in the past three days because he, too, had been alone. The bartender, a beefy bulk of a man, ludicrously called Junior, had confided that this individual drank nothing but tomato juice.

"Are you positive?" Hermie asked Junior. "Seems to me, if he drank so much tomato juice, he would not look like a plate of yesterday's mashed potatoes."

"I have it on good authority that's all he ever drinks! He lives at

"Parasite: an animal or plant which lives on or in an organism of another species (the host), from the body of which it obtains nutriment . . ."

the hotel up the street and the kitchen ran out once or twice in the past week and now he comes here!"

"Well," breathed Hermie, gulping his third beer and shoving the glass toward Junior.

"That will be number four," he warned, but Hermie nudged him. The subject of their conversation had moved into the seat next to Hermie.

"You'll pardon the intrusion, sir," he spoke in perfect unaccented English, "but I thought perhaps, you wouldn't object to some companionship."

"Never have truer words been spoken," agreed Hermie. "Can I buy you a drink?"

"No, thank you. What I have is adequate," he said indicating his glass. There was a red, crescent-shaped mark on the back of his hand. "You are a native of this community?" he continued.

"Yes, siree, Hermie Gold's the name. Here's my card." He smiled, extracting a card from his wallet. "I arrange for all sorts of odd jobs that people can't do for themselves."

"And this is how you live?"

Hermie looked around and lowered his voice, "I'm doing great, no complaints and it beats working for a living."

The man's face moved in a facsimile of a smile.

"You're a stranger about here, aren't you?"

"I'm on a holiday," he said, toying with his glass. "I'm thinking of staying on awhile; I'm enjoying your little town."

"Been here long?" Hermie shot back.

"Week or two." He picked up the business card flipping it in his long, skinny fingers.

"You know, Mr. Gold, I could use a man tomorrow night for a few hours. Do you think it could be arranged?"

"If you want someone, it's done," Hermie exclaimed plopping the bar with his hand to emphasize the point. "Of course, it will cost you \$20. You understand, they are all top boys and they know how to keep quiet!"

"Naturally," he agreed and he extracted the money from his wallet.

"At six o'clock tomorrow night, Argus Hotel, Room 306."

"Got you!"

"One more thing; this may sound strange to you, but be sure the man has a bath before he comes."

Hermie stared at him, "Sure . . . sure, all my boys are clean. By the way, I didn't get your name."

"Ted Parks." He smiled again grotesquely. "Thank you again. Good-

night, Mr. Gold." He walked off and sat down at his end of the bar.

Before Hermie could protest, a man in a dark gray suit stuck his elbow in his side. "Have another beer on me Hermie."

"Lieutenant," the short man smiled, nodding at Junior. "What is the occasion?"

"It has to be an occasion?"

"Come on now Lieutenant, the Golden Doubloon is not exactly your hangout!"

"All right Hermie." The lieutenant scanned the occupants of the bar and his eyes rested momentarily on the tomato juice drinker at the other end of the bar then returned to his companion.

"Have you seen any strangers in town in the past couple of days?"

Hermie wrinkled his brow. "Not that I've noticed. What's up?"

But the lieutenant ignored his question. "What about that man down the end of the bar?"

"Him," Hermie exclaimed, "I don't know. I've been watching him every night during the past week in that same spot. He lives at the Argus, Room 306. He seems pretty harmless though; I was just talking to him."

"He live alone?"

"That I don't know. Be easy enough to check."

"I'll take care of that." The graying policeman drummed on the bar with his fingers absently.

"You know, Lewis," the little man said, "if you'll tell me what you're after I could, in all probability, come up with something . . . but I cannot do anything in a blind alley."

Lt. Ralph Lewis who worked out of the Lafayette Precinct, laughed. "You're right Hermie, but there's an element here I don't like. It could be dangerous!"

"Since when have I become a powder pull? I have a lot of contacts."

The lieutenant spun a half a dollar on the bar and said, "All right Hermie, you've convinced me. Come on, let's take a little ride."

"This is not a pinch, Lieutenant?" He looked at him dubiously and Lewis grimaced, leaning over him.

"You've been doing something illegal?"

Hermie shrugged and gesticulated with his pudgy hands. "Now Lieutenant, a man has to live!"

"Get into the car, boy." Hermie stood on the curb looking up and down the dust-ridden street, then slid into the seat and slammed the door after him.

Darkness had edged in over the distant rim of mountains as Lewis headed in the general direction of the Flats outside of town.

Hermie sighed then casually lit a cigarette. "You know, Lieutenant, one of these days the suspense is going to kill me!"

Lewis didn't laugh this time. He pulled up short on the road bordering the dune-like sands of the Flats.

Hermie stared at his friend.

"Look across the Flats, tell me what you see!"

The moon shone brilliantly out here, touching the sand with an eerie light that spread across the dunes to the mountains. But the expanse was marred by the unmistakable contour of an aircraft.

"It's a plane, Lieutenant; how did it get here?"

"It was reported three days ago to be exact. A salesman stopped at the station and reported the plane on the Flats; but when he saw it, there were lights and this man swore that the plane glowed!"

"Was he sober?"

Lewis glared at him. "We haven't found a trace of any pilot or passengers. There are no strangers reported in town the past three days. All we have is one deserted aircraft!"

"No markings of any kind?"

"Nothing, absolutely a-blank."

"What about that character at the bar?"

"You said he'd been here a week!"

"But you don't know for sure whether that plane has been here for a week or three days. It could have been here without anyone spotting it, that's all."

"So we'll check him."

"Now what do you want from me Lieutenant?"

"Anything at all . . . are there any rumbles?"

Hermie shook his head. "Things have been quiet. It's the slow season, but give me a couple of days; I'll see what I can dig up."

He stared at the dark outline of the plane again, then opened the car door. "Let's take a look, Lieutenant!"

"All right, but there's nothing here; the boys were all over this area again this afternoon. Didn't even find a fingerprint!"

The hard sand crunched beneath their feet as they circled the plane and Lewis shone his flashlight on the hatchway.

"The seal's broken Hermie," he breathed. "Someone's been here!"

Hermie's breath came in short hisses as Lewis cautiously mounted the steps and opened the door. "Do you think that's wise, Lieutenant?"

Lewis motioned him on. Hermie puffed up the steps and followed him into the cabin.

"Search the tail section, Hermie, while I check the cockpit."

The squat man worked his way aft and pushed open the door, and right in front of him, hanging upside down from a pulley arrangement was a man, trussed like a side of beef in a butcher shop.

He gasped loudly, then backed into from where he came colliding with solid flesh.

"Lieutenant," he whispered rather desperately and Lewis growled, "Now who do you think . . ."

But Hermie merely pointed to the swinging figure ahead of them and the lieutenant was silent.

"Get back to the car Hermie," he ordered grasping the man. His flesh was cold to the touch.

"Alone, Lieutenant?"

"No," he said thoughtfully, shining the light on the figure once more. "There's nothing we can do for him!"

"What a way to leave him," Hermie whispered.

"Yeah," echoed the lieutenant as he radioed the station. He remained at the scene only until the squad car arrived, then drove back to town. The men were silent until Lewis pulled up before the Golden Doubloon then Hermie got out. He leaned against the door, "I'll see you around."

"Right." Hermie watched him drive off in the direction of the Argus Hotel up the block.

Hermie doubled back to the bar but the pasty faced man was gone. He sat down on his usual stool and Junior stared at him.

"Double bourbon." He looked around anxiously. "Where's the tomato juice kid?" he whispered.

"He left right after you Hermie!"

The little man gulped the drink and pushed out into the night hurriedly. He turned in the opposite direction from the Argus Hotel, shoved his hands in his pockets and slipped down a dingy side street. This wasn't exactly the good section of Riverside. He walked close to the buildings blending into the dirty gray surroundings like he belonged then, after a quick look in either direction, entered the pawn shop. He didn't stop in the outer room but went directly to the rear.

A misshapen gray man, placid in old age, sat directly under a shaded bulb, the daily paper clutched in his withered fingers.

Hermie fell into the chair opposite him and the old man squinted at

him from over the edge of the newspaper. "To what do I owe this visit, Hermie, my boy?"

"Do you have anyone working over at that joint on the edge of town — you know the one I mean — Poppa David, by Dune Road?"

"Ah, you mean the good lieutenant has discovered the aircraft out on the Flats!"

Hermie glared at the old man, who always seemed to be one jump ahead of him even though he never moved from his little shop. He had operated solely from the little back room for thirty years and he hadn't been wrong yet.

"All right Poppa, I haven't time to play games now. A man was found murdered out there tonight . . . inside the plane. Someone had jimmied the door; the cop's seal was broken! What do you know?"

"Ah yes," the old man hissed, pressing his fingers together methodically, noiselessly. The paper had slid to the floor. "Joey had been out there, just before you and the good lieutenant arrived to see what he could acquire, but he saw the same piece of butchery you did and he returned empty-handed. He was scared, plain scared."

"How long has that plane been there?"

"Precisely seven days. Unfortunately none of the boys actually saw it land but as near as we can figure it, we would say about three a.m. Saturday."

"Occupants?"

Poppa David shrugged his thin shoulders. "Now there you have me. The boys have been scouring the town for foreign-appearing strangers but," he gesticulated with his hands, "nothing!"

"The plane is not an American make?"

"Or anything in it!"

"Thanks Poppa," he wheezed dropping a bill on the table.

"Give my regards to the good lieutenant."

"Yeah sure," he said. "Incidentally, send Joey to this address at six p.m. tomorrow. A little job for him."

Poppa David nodded and Hermie left as surreptitiously as he came.

The Main Street was deserted this time and the big clock in the church steeple sonorously boomed out two o'clock. He stood a minute at the curb watching the neon lights vanish one by one up and down the "cultural center", then as the traffic signal changed to green he slouched in the direction of his apartment.

It was exactly nine o'clock when Hermie slid into his accustomed seat



at the Golden Doubloon. He looked expectantly down the end of the bar but there was no-one. Junior shoved his sandwich across the bar and Hermie ate absentmindedly; then the familiar reflection of Lieutenant Lewis showed up beside him.

"Hear you been looking for me," he said tersely.

"Yeah, where you been Lieutenant," Hermie mumbled between bites.

"Here and there. What have you got?"

"Number one," he stopped, looking behind him, then continued, "the plane has been on the Flats since last Sunday morning, say about three a.m. Two; it's been manufactured outside of the good ole U. S. A."

Lewis glared at him. "Hermie you continually amaze me!"

"Why, Lieutenant, why? I always manage to help a bit don't I?"

"You certainly do, but this is going to land you smack in the middle of the Federal Agents in town."

Hermie's usual slitted eyes rounded enormously. "Now, Lieutenant."

"Wait," Lewis cut him off, "before you hang yourself further. An examination by an aircraft expert this afternoon, mind you, this afternoon, proved your point conclusively. But it is an exact replica of one of ours and an expert was required to determine this. Get my point?"

"Definitely."

"Now there are at least five of us with that knowledge plus whoever piloted it in."

"Five?"

"Two Federal Agents, the aircraft expert, you, me, and . . ." He looked at Hermie expectantly.

He shrugged. "You know I pick up things everywhere!"

"One of these days, you're going to have to make up your mind, Hermie."

"First things first, Lieutenant. What did you find out at the Argus?"

"Absolutely nothing. Visitor on a holiday, ordinary luggage, nothing suspicious. Some sort of a horticultural nut though. He has his room filled with plants."

"What about the body in the plane? Have you identified him?"

"Yes, an ex-Air Force man. Nathaniel B. Laurence. Disappeared from his usual haunts about two weeks ago." He scrutinized Hermie. "Have you been near the area since?"

"You should know better than that!"

"Well brace yourself, my boy; sometime last night Pete Higgins, who, incidently was on duty at the site of the plane, was murdered."

Hermie stared at him, his veined pigeyes round in horror. "Was he?"

The lieutenant nodded.

Hermie swallowed hard than gulped his drink.

"Yes, trussed up in the exact same manner. We found out the reason too; something your informant missed."

"There's more?"

"The bodies of Laurence and Higgins were completely devoid of blood."

"I don't get it." The little man shook his head in slow motion.

"Watch your companions, Hermie," Lewis warned. "You have as much blood as the rest of us . . . maybe more."

"Lieutenant!"

"Drop around at the office tomorrow morning about ten. The Federal boys will want to talk to you."

"Yeah, sure," he wheezed, wiping his face with a gray handkerchief.

"I'll be there." He rapped on the bar as Lewis left the Golden Doubloon.

"Double bourbon, Junior." Hermie's voice was a raspy whisper.

"This makes two nights in a row."

"Never mind, never mind." He sipped the glass thoughtfully, then looked into the eyes of the florid faced bartender indicating his head toward the end of the bar. "Where's the tomato juice kid?"

"Haven't seen him since last night."

"Hmmm." He pushed the unfinished glass away from him and hurried out of the Golden Doubloon. He stood for a moment on the sidewalk, frowning, kicked a cigar butt then walked toward the blinking lights of the Argus Hotel. But before he reached the lighted facade, a figure called from the darkened alley.

"Hermie . . ."

He peered into the darkness and the burly figure of Joe emerged from the dark.

"Where'd you pick up this joker, Hermie?"

"Why?" the little man asked. "Didn't it work out?"

"Sure, but the guy's a nut. Bought me dinner then had me take care of his plants. And he wants me to come back every night this week!"

"What's so bad about that?"

"A double sawbuck every night for playing nursemaid to a roomfull of plants. The guy must be rolling!"

"Ah, ah, Joe," Hermie warned, "remember you are strictly on the up-and-up with this bird."

"Yeah, sure," he grunted and disappeared into the dark again. At

the end of the alley Hermie saw the quick flash of light from the rear door as Joe re-entered the hotel, then he sighed.

"The lieutenant was right. A one hundred percent nut!" He continued on down the street, keeping well out on the edge of the sidewalk away from the dark shadowed alleys. He kept glancing over his shoulder sure that someone was following him but never saw a movement.

Hermie headed in the general direction of Poppa David's old shop then suddenly stopped realizing that was the most deserted part of town.

On the corner of Lafayette he hesitated to light a cigarette, then he heard a slight scuffling sound; before he could turn a stunning blow caught him on the neck and he felt himself falling. The last thing he saw were the fading green lights of the Police Station across the street and he felt himself being dragged back . . . back into the dark. He tried to scream but no sound would come. He dug his nails into the finger clutching him under the armpits and heard an agonizing grunt; then the darkness was complete.

"Come on Hermie," Lewis's voice came through to him, "wake up; snap out of it!"

Hermie opened his eyes to the harsh, glaring light of the station house.

"Did you get him, Lieutenant?"

"Who?"

"The man who jumped me from behind." He raised himself on one elbow. "Honest, Lieutenant. I was lighting a cigarette when this joker hits me on the back of the neck. I fall then he pulls me along the sidewalk into the shadows."

"That's all?"

"I dug my nails into his finger. Whoever it is should have a mangled finger."

"Which hand did you use?"

"My right. Why?"

The graying lieutenant turned to the sergeant beside him. "Get Bruno."

"Now the hand, Hermie."

He unclenched his right hand and there were bits of skin clinging to his nails and a sticky fluid on the fingertips.

Lewis frowned. "That's peculiar. You scratched him up quite a bit but there's no evidence of bleeding."

A modest-appearing, spectacled man approached them.

"Look at this Bruno," Lewis said. "He ripped his assailant's finger and there's not one trace of blood!"

The man stared at the hand closely. "Can you walk Hermie," he asked tersely.

The obese man nodded.

"Let's go down the hall to the lab. All right Lieutenant?"

"Of course."

An hour later Bruno faced a worried Hermie. Lewis paced the floor agitatedly. "Now you are positive it was a man?"

"Naturally Lieutenant; besides what else could hit me on the neck and drag me that distance. I'm no lightweight!" He looked from Bruno to Lewis, then his little eyes rested on Bruno again.

"Now stop holding out. What do you think it was?"

Bruno stared at the lieutenant, then he leaned on the edge of the desk. "Well Hermie, the particles we removed from your hand had all the outward appearance of human flesh but structually," he shrugged, "it has the substance of a vegetable."

Hermie opened his mouth but Bruno gesticulated with his hand silencing him.

"In other words, if what you say is true," the lab man continued, "we have a facsimile of a man in this town who isn't human. If you had exerted pressure on one finger, I firmly believe it would have snapped off like a carrot. The fluid on your hand must have been the creature's equivalent of blood. Say for instance, like the sap in a tree."

"He's got to be kidding, Lieutenant."

Lewis shook his head. "We have a real problem now." They could hear a phone ringing far off but it sounded unreal. Hermie looked out of the dirty window and dawn was edging across the sky, pushing out the darkness of night.

The sergeant opened the door slowly.

"Well," Lewis snapped.

"We have another one, Lieutenant," he breathed deeply. "The murderer couldn't get back into the plane so he hung the victim to a tree on the main highway just outside of the Flats."

"Who was it?"

"A woman this time. Sally, you know her—the waitress from the Cafe out on Dune Road."

Lewis stared at the sergeant, then walked out of the office. Hermie hopped after him. "Drop me off will you, Lieutenant?"

"Sure," he exclaimed but he didn't say another word until Hermie

was about to leave him. "Lock your doors and go to bed. I'll bring the Federal boys to you later on."

"Okay . . ."

Hermie stared after the disappearing headlights, then hurried to his apartment bolting the door behind him. He went into the bathroom, scrubbed his hands clean then fell across the bed fully clothed . . . but he couldn't sleep. He prowled the apartment thinking; a man who wasn't a man; a reasonable facsimile of human life, Bruno had said. It was impossible . . . there was a plane made of a metal unknown to man and a murderer who evidently required blood to sustain his own life.

He sat down heavily in a chair, leaning back; perhaps if he closed his eyes for a few minutes . . .

Hermie awakened with a snort. It was dark outside then he realized someone was knocking at the door.

"Yeah," he called hiking up his trousers.

"It's me Hermie, Joe; let me in!"

The pudgy man opened the door cautiously then took off the chain.

"Where you been, boy? I've been looking for you for hours." He peered at him. "What's the matter? you look green."

"Nothing, Joe, nothing at all. How about a beer?"

"Sure thing."

"What did you want?" he asked while he punched the cans open.

"I could have used another man today. I was hoping you knew of someone . . . we sure were busy!"

"Still working for Parks?"

"Yes, but he ran me to the ground today."

Hermie looked at him.

"Well," Joe continued, "first we went out to the Flats, examined the plane."

"How did you get close to it?"

"One of the local boys was on duty; he didn't mind . . ." he guffawed loudly, ". . . that Mr. Parks stuck a good luck charm on the plane. Can you imagine that?"

Hermie leaned forward intently. "Good luck charm?"

"Nothing to get excited about. Just a metal disc with a red crescent cut on it, that's all!"

Hermie relaxed again and gulped some beer. "Then what did you do?"

"This will kill you," he ejaculated, slapping his thigh. "We had a picnic on the desert. He held up his hand. "Wait, that's not all. We transplanted all his flowers out in the gulch!"

Hermie studied him, his small eyes steady, his brain busily sifting and sorting but he came up with nothing.

"I suppose your job is finished now."

"Not yet; I have one more trip to the Gulch."

Hermie frowned.

"Yeah, I have three quarts of liquid to feed the plants."

The small hairs stood up on Hermie's neck. "Feed the plants?"

"Yeah," he answered, withdrawing a small corked vial filled with a red liquid, from his pocket. "Plant food, you know these nuts!"

"When are you going back to the Gulch?"

"In about an hour. Want to come?"

"Yeah," Hermie breathed, "meet me at the Golden Doubloon."

"Okay," Joe agreed and they left the apartment together.

It was Hermie's hour when he slipped into his accustomed seat at the Golden Doubloon. Junior slid the sandwich down the bar and Hermie looked about anxiously. He expected the lieutenant, but Lewis didn't show so he had his usual two beers and left quietly.

Joe picked him up directly in front of the bar and they joined the stream of traffic headed out of town. As usual, there was a crowd of sightseers stopped at the edge of Dune Road.

"You'd think they'd never seen a plane before," Joe said.

"Say," Hermie exclaimed, "isn't that Parks by the tail section?"

"Yeah," he agreed, speeding up into the old desert road.

Hermie looked at him. "Why'd you do that?"

"I'm supposed to feed these plants by myself in the dark," he confided, pulling up to a dusty stop.

The plants stood two feet high in the gulch, tipped silver by the moonlight. Joe bent over pouring three ounces of liquid at the base of each plant. The foliage swayed, even though there was no breeze.

"If I didn't know better, I'd swear the things were alive," Hermie breathed.

"Get the last container will you, Hermie—this one is almost empty. I don't want to hang around here all night!"

"Yeah, sure. I don't go for this deal either."

He bent over snapping off a leaf and a sticky fluid covered his fingers. "Shine your light in this direction Joe." He felt cold inside when he saw

IF YOU HAVE MISSED any of our earlier issues, see pages 123, 124, and 126 for a listing of contents—and order from page 128.

the bits of leaf clinging to his fingers and the same colorless fluid settling about his finger nails. He brushed the bits of leaf down into the dirt and rubbed his fingers in the moist earth of the Gulch. The sinewy veins of the leaf reached out for the earth and disappeared from his unbelieving eyes. It was replanting itself, sending runners along the ground seeking the moist liquid Joe had applied. This was what they were searching for.

There was no doubt about it at all now. Ted Parks was their man. He had to get back to the lieutenant immediately.

"Come on, Joe, let's get out of here!"

"Wait I've got my foot caught!"

Hermie flashed the light on the ground; the runners from the leaves he had ground into the dirt had wrapped their tentacles about Joe's ankles. The man fell to his knees dropping the bottle of fluid.

The bottle hit the stones and smashed in jagged pieces and Joe fell face-forward, screaming as he went. A jagged tear in his throat cut off his voice and Hermie knew he was dead.

The leaves and vines surrounded Joe like hands devouring him. He tried to pull Joe out of the tangled mess but the vines held fast. Hermie backed away, realizing this was why Parks wanted Joe out here alone. He, too, would have been killed leaving no witnesses whatsoever. It was then Hermie saw that the warm liquid had splashed all over him and the vines were reaching toward him. He ran then and the headlights pointed up the blood spattered all over him. Mr. Parks didn't need the blood; it was to breed his plants—more vegetable people like himself! He drove frantically toward town.

As he neared the Flats, the horizon was suddenly lighted up with a tremendous flash, and buffeting sound waves made him slow down. He drove until he was abreast of the plane area and saw nothing but a crater.

But as he peered closer he saw the remains of a white, mealy hand, crescent marked, on the black macadam of Dune Road. As he watched it, the pasty colored fingers were attempting to scratch themselves back to the earth. It was the hand of Ted Parks.

He stood there, hypnotized, watching the dismembered hand move by degrees. Parks must have deliberately exploded the plane, blowing himself up with it. But most of all, Hermie realized, he did it because his job was finished. He wouldn't completely die because every part of him that was scattered throughout the desert would re-seed itself and grow a new being.

*(Turn to Page 112)*

# The Outsider

by H. P. Lovecraft

(author of *The Lurking Fear*)

- That night the Baron dreamt of many a wo;  
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form  
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,  
Were long be-nightmared.

— Keats.

UNHAPPY IS HE TO WHOM the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness. Wretched is he who looks back upon lone hours in vast and dismal chambers with brown hangings and maddening rows of antique books, or upon awed watches in twilight groves of grotesque, gigantic, and vine-encumbered trees that silently wave twisted branches far aloft. Such a lot the gods gave to me—to me, the dazed, the disappointed; the barren, the broken. And yet I am strangely content, and cling desperately to those sere memories, when my mind momentarily threatens to reach beyond to *the other*.

Most demoniacal of shocks is that of the abysmally unexpected and the grotesquely unbelievable . . .



I know not where I was born, save that the castle was infinitely old and infinitely horrible; full of dark passages and having high ceilings where the eye could find only cobwebs and shadows. The stones in the crumbling corridors seemed always hideously damp, and there was an accursed smell everywhere, as of the piled-up corpses of dead generations. It was never light, so that I used sometimes to light candles and gaze steadily at them for relief; nor was there any sun outdoors, since the terrible trees grew high above the topmost accessible tower. There was one black tower which reached above the trees into the unknown outer sky, but that was partly ruined and could not be ascended save by a well-nigh impossible climb up the sheer wall, stone by stone.

I must have lived years in this place, but I can not measure the time. Beings must have cared for my needs, yet I can not recall any person except myself; or anything alive but the noiseless rats and bats and spiders. I think that whoever nursed me must have been shockingly aged, since my first conception of a living person was that of something mockingly like myself, yet distorted, shriveled, and decaying like the castle. To me there was nothing grotesque in the bones and skeletons that strewed some of the stone crypts deep down among the foundations. I fantastically associated these things with everyday events, and thought them more natural than the colored pictures of living beings which I found in many of the moldy books. From such books I learned all that I know. No teacher urged or guided me, and I do not recall hearing any human voice in all those years—not even my own; for although I had read of speech, I had never thought to try to speak aloud. My aspect was a matter equally unthought of, for there were no mirrors in the castle, and I merely regarded myself by instinct as akin to the youthful figures I saw drawn and painted in the books. I felt conscious of youth because I remembered so little.

Outside, across the putrid moat and under the dark trees, I would often lie and dream for hours about what I read in the books; and would longingly picture myself amidst gay crowds in the sunny world beyond the endless forest. Once I tried to escape from the forest, but as I went farther from the castle the shade grew denser and the air more filled with brooding fear; so that I ran frantically back lest I lose my way in a labyrinth of nighted silence.

So through endless twilights I dreamed and waited, though I knew not what I waited for. Then in the shadowy solitude my longing for light grew so frantic that I could rest no more, and I lifted entreating hands to the single black ruined tower that reached above the forest

into the unknown outer sky. And at last I resolved to scale that tower, fall though I might; since it were better to glimpse the sky and perish, than to live without ever beholding day.

In the dark twilight I climbed the worn and aged stone stairs till I reached the level where they ceased, and thereafter clung perilously to small footholds leading upward. Ghastly and terrible was that dead, stairless cylinder of rock; black, ruined, and deserted, and sinister with startled bats whose wings made no noise. But more ghastly and terrible still was the slowness of my progress; for climb as I might, the darkness overhead grew no thinner, and a new chill as of haunted and venerable mold assailed me. I shivered as I wondered why I did not reach the light, and would have looked down had I dared. I fancied that night had come suddenly upon me, and vainly groped with one free hand for a window embrasure, that I might peer out and above, and try to judge the height I had attained.

All at once, after an infinity of awesome, sightless crawling up that concave and desperate precipice, I felt my head touch a solid thing, and knew I must have gained the roof, or at least some kind of floor. In the darkness I raised my free hand and tested the barrier, finding it stone and immovable. Then came a deadly circuit of the tower, clinging to whatever holds the slimy wall could give; till finally my testing hand found the barrier yielding, and I turned upward again, pushing the slab or door with my head as I used both hands in my fearful ascent. There was no light revealed above, and as my hands went higher I knew that my climb was for the nonce ended; since the slab was the trap-door of an aperture leading to a level stone surface of greater circumference than the lower tower, no doubt the floor of some lofty and capacious observation chamber. I crawled through carefully, and tried to prevent the heavy slab from falling back into place; but failed in the latter attempt. As I lay exhausted on the stone floor I heard the eerie echoes of its fall, but hoped when necessary to pry it up again.

Believing I was now at a prodigious height, far above the accursed branches of the wood, I dragged myself up from the floor and fumbled about for windows, that I might look for the first time upon the sky, and the moon and stars of which I had read. But on every hand I was disappointed; since all that I found were vast shelves of marble, bearing odious oblong boxes of disturbing size. More and more I reflected, and wondered what hoary secrets might abide in this high apartment so many eons cut off from the castle below. Then unexpectedly my hands came upon a doorway, where hung a portal of stone, rough

with strange chiseling. Trying it, I found it locked; but with a supreme burst of strength I overcame all obstacles and dragged it open inward. As I did so there came to me the purest ecstasy I have ever known; for shining tranquilly through an ornate grating of iron, and down a short stone passageway of steps that ascended from the newly found doorway, was the radiant full moon, which I had never before seen save in dreams and in vague visions I dared not call memories.

Fancying now that I had attained the very pinnacle of the castle, I commenced to rush up the few steps beyond the door; but the sudden veiling of the moon by a cloud caused me to stumble, and I felt my way more slowly in the dark. It was still very dark when I reached the grating—which I tried carefully and found unlocked, but which I did not open for fear of falling from the amazing height to which I had climbed. Then the moon came out.

Most demoniacal of all shocks is that of the abysmally unexpected and grotesquely unbelievable. Nothing I had before undergone could compare in terror with what I now saw; with the bizarre marvels that sight implied. The sight itself was as simple as it was stupefying, for it was merely this: instead of a dizzying prospect of treetops seen from a lofty eminence, there stretched around me on a level through the grating nothing less than *the solid ground*, decked and diversified by marble slabs and columns, and overshadowed by an ancient stone church, whose ruined spire gleamed spectrally in the moonlight.

Half unconscious I opened the grating and staggered out upon the white gravel path that stretched away in two directions. My mind, stunned and chaotic as it was, still held the frantic craving for light; and not even the fantastic wonder which had happened could stay my course. I neither knew nor cared whether my experience was insanity, dreaming, or magic; but was determined to gaze on brilliance and gayety at any cost. I knew not who I was or what I was, or what my surroundings might be; though as I continued to stumble along I became conscious of a kind of fearsome latent memory that made my progress not wholly fortuitous. I passed under an arch out of that region of slabs and columns, and wandered through the open country; sometimes following the visible road, but sometimes leaving it curiously to tread across meadows where only occasional ruins bespoke the ancient presence of a forgotten road. Once I swam across a swift river where crumbling, mossy masonry told of a bridge long vanished.

Over two hours must have passed before I reached what seemed to be my goal, a venerable ivied castle in a thickly wooded park; mad-

deningly familiar, yet full of perplexing strangeness to me. I saw that the moat was filled in, and that some of the well known towers were demolished; while new wings existed to confuse the beholder. But what I observed with chief interest and delight were the open windows—gorgeously ablaze with light and sending forth sound of the gayest revelry. Advancing to one of these I looked in and saw an oddly dressed company, indeed; making merry, and speaking brightly to one another. I had never, seemingly, heard human speech before; and could guess only vaguely what was said. Some of the faces seemed to hold expressions that brought up incredibly remote recollections; others were utterly alien.

I new stepped through the low window into the brilliantly lighted room, stepping as I did so from my single bright moment of hope to my blackest convulsion of despair and realization. The nightmare was quick to come, for as I entered, there occurred immediately one of the most terrifying demonstrations I had ever conceived. Scarcely had I crossed the sill when there descended upon the whole company a sudden and unheralded fear of hideous intensity, distorting every face and evoking the most horrible screams from nearly every throat. Flight was universal, and in the clamor and panic several fell in a swoon and were dragged away by their madly fleeing companions. Many covered their eyes with their hands, and plunged blindly and awkwardly in their race to escape, overturning furniture and stumbling against the walls before they managed to reach one of the many doors.

The cries were shocking; and as I stood in the brilliant apartment alone and dazed, listening to their vanishing echoes, I trembled at the thought of what might be lurking near me unseen. At a casual inspection the room seemed deserted, but when I moved toward one of the alcoves I thought I detected a presence there—a hint of motion beyond the golden-arched doorway leading to another and somewhat similar room. As I approached the arch I began to perceive the presence more clearly; and then, with the first and last sound I ever uttered—a ghastly ululation that revolted me almost as poignantly as its noxious cause—I beheld in full, frightful vividness the inconceivable, indescribable, and unmentionable monstrosity which had by its simple appearance changed a merry company to a herd of delirious fugitives.

I can not even hint what it was like, for it was a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable. It was the ghoulish shade of decay, antiquity, and desolation; the putrid, dripping epidolon of unwholesome revelation; the awful bearing of that which the merciful earth should always hide. God knows it was not of this world—

or no longer of this world — yet to my horror I saw in its eaten-away and bone-revealing outlines a leering, abhorrent travesty on the human shape; and in its moldy, disintegrating apparel an unspeakable quality that chilled me even more.

I was almost paralyzed, but not too much so to make a feeble effort toward flight; a backward stumble which failed to break the spell in which the nameless, voiceless monster held me. My eyes, bewitched by the glassy orbs which stared loathsomely into them, refused to close; though they were mercifully blurred, and showed the terrible object but indistinctly after the first shock. I tried to raise my hand to shut out the sight, yet so stunned were my nerves that my arm could not fully obey my will. The attempt, however, was enough to disturb my balance; so that I had to stagger forward several steps to avoid falling. As I did so I became suddenly and agonizingly aware of the *nearness* of the carrion thing, whose hideous hollow breathing I half fancied I could hear. Nearly mad, I found myself yet able to throw out a hand to ward off the fetid apparition which pressed so close; when in one cataclysmic second of cosmic nightmarishness and hellish accident *my fingers touched the rotting outstretched paw of the monster beneath the golden arch.*

I did not shriek, but all the fiendish ghouls that ride the night-wind shrieked for me as in that same second there crashed down upon my mind a single and fleeting avalanche of soul-annihilating memory. I knew in that second all that had been; I remembered beyond the frightful castle and the trees, and recognized the altered edifice in which I now stood; I recognized, most terrible of all, the unholy abomination that stood leering before me as I withdrew my sullied fingers from its own.

But in the cosmos there is balm as well as bitterness, and that balm is nepenthe. In the supreme horror of that second I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images. In a dream I fled from that haunted and accursed pile, and ran swiftly and silently in the moonlight. When I returned to the churchyard place of marble and went down the steps I found the stone trap-door immovable; but I was not sorry, for I had hated the antique castle and the trees. Now I ride with the mocking and friendly ghouls on the nightwind, and play by day amongst the catacombs of Nephren-Ka in the sealed and unknown valley of Hadoth by the Nile. I know that light is not for me, save that of the moon over the rock tombs of Neb, nor any gayety save the unnamed feasts of Nitokris beneath the Great Pyramid; yet in my new wildness and freedom I almost welcome the bitterness of alienage.

For although nepenthe has calmed me, I know always that I am an outsider; a stranger, in this century and among those who are still men. This I have known ever since I stretched out my fingers to the abomination within that great gilded frame; stretched out my fingers and touched *a cold and unyielding surface of polished glass.*

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## THE CRAWLER

by ROBERT W. LOWNDES

The papers spoke of gangdom's vengeful hand,  
Or tie-ups with a foreign enemy,  
When four men who had vanished secretly  
At last were found, hanged in a grisly band  
In an upper room of the old Strickland place.  
None of the write-ups mentioned the odd fact  
That ten years' dust therein had been untracked,  
Or that the slayer left behind no trace.

I heard from a patrolman who'd been there  
That sounds, as of a crawling thing, were heard  
The night they found the dead men, and a stair  
Had creaked beneath a nameless shape that blurred.  
None of the four had seemed aware of doom,  
But all'd complained of rats inside their room.

# The White Domino

*by Urann Thayer*

BEYOND THE BARS OF MY CELL, I can see the guillotine, towering up to heaven in the bleak prison courtyard. The shadow of its bulk is thrown across the floor here, vying with the shadows of the bars; and now and then a black form blots out these dark lines as I stare at the stone paving — and when I look up, I can see a workman, laboring on the hateful machine. He is oiling the instrument of death, getting it in readiness to take my life!

And yet, even now, I do not know whether or not I am guilty of murder.

I, Robert Merrill, a graduate of the medical school of John Hopkins University, arrived in Paris a few days before carnival, in 1927, planning upon a week of pleasure before going on to Vienna to continue my studies. And such a gay time I had, through acquaintances made by letters of introduction, that it was only a couple of days before my plan-

"To kiss me will cost you nothing. . . But . . . once having left this house with me, if you refuse to kiss me, you will die!"

ned departure that I got around to the one task I had set for myself during my stay—a visit to the famous Paris morgue.

This institution of horrors—according to the layman—is of greatest scientific interest to the student of anatomy, containing, as it does, examples of bodily abnormalities and kindred things which are not to be found elsewhere. And so, one fine morning, I left my hotel, jumped in a taxi, and fifteen minutes later I was passing through the heavy door of the gray stone building.

The keeper examined my permit, and then conducted me into a cold, clammy room, where a thin light, filtering through narrow windows, faintly illuminated the huge table, covered with a marble slab, which stood alone in the center of the chamber.

"This," explained my guide, "is where the students make autopsies on the bodies of people who have died from unknown causes. If you come back tonight," he added, "you can see one—they are to examine a man found dead in the Rue de Rivoli."

Next, he led me through the "Chamber of Curiosities," fondling the bottled abnormalities, preserved in alcohol, which I will not describe, as they are as horrible to the unscientific man as they are of interest to the man of science; and finally we arrived at the "Chamber of Horrors," a dim room, lined with dark slabs, on which lay corpses, white, naked, and stiff.

"These are the unidentified," explained my guide—"men and women killed by accident or design; suicides found floating down the Seine. We embalm them and hold them as long as we can, waiting for relatives to claim them. Our corpses are the best-kept corpses in the world," he added proudly.

He started on, but halted as I stopped with an exclamation.

Lying on a slab at my side was the body of the most exquisite woman I had ever seen! Her face was a perfect oval, and as white as chiseled marble. Dark, glossy hair fell back, undulating, and dropped over the edge of the slab. Her long, dark lashes emphasized the waxen beauty of her bloodless cheeks. Her lips were slightly parted, and still red enough to show a clear and perfectly-formed cupid's bow.

Only one thing marred her still beauty: two deep, blue marks on her throat.

Fascinated, my eyes swept her body, and returned to her face. And then, suddenly, I felt my heart jump.

I could have sworn that the lashes flickered—that I saw a tiny gleam beneath them, as if she were looking up at me!



From far away I heard the keeper's voice, speaking to me. "It may be dissected tomorrow, or the day after at the latest," he said.

I swung around. "Good God, man!" I cried. "That girl isn't dead!"

The keeper laughed. "She's dead all right," he replied. "She has already been examined by the doctors and the coroner. She was strangled some time last night in Pere Lachaise Cemetery."

"And you found out who did it?" I asked, speaking, for some reason, nearly in a whisper.

The man shook his head. "Not yet, but we will. French justice moves very slowly, but it gets its man every time!" he muttered, tapping me on the shoulder. "It gets its man every time!"

The ball that night at Madame Lamonte's—the last night of carnival—was probably the gayest affair I ever attended. I arrived shortly before ten, with a group of acquaintances, and, adjusting our masks as we stepped onto the balcony, we surveyed the scene in the ball-room below.

Through the crashing of cymbals and the throb of drums, the mass of dancers turned, whirled, writhed: red Pierrot with a green sea nymph; a scarlet devil with a Borgia in black; vikings, cavaliers, cardinals, Turks, goddesses, Sapphos, and South Sea maidens; whirling, gyrating, forming colors, changing colors . . .

As I reached the bottom of the steps, my hostess came up, holding out her hand. She was costumed as a gypsy.

"I don't know who you are," she said, "although, Monsieur d'Artagnan," she added, with a smile, "you look suspiciously like a young surgeon I met last week. In any case," she went on, "I'm sure you're thirsty!"

I agreed with my hostess, and, together with my companions, I followed her to one of several long tables against the wall, where wines, champagnes, liqueurs, sandwiches, and pastries were being served to the guests. A bottle of champagne was opened and our glasses filled.

The man beside me—Captain Henderson, dressed as an Arab sheikh—raised his glass. "Here's to the most beautiful girl in the world!" he cried. "May I dance with her tonight!"

He lifted the glass to his lips; but Madame Lamonte stopped him. "Wait!" she said. "Don't speak so glibly of the most beautiful girl in the world, Monsieur! How do you know she would please you, even if she could be found? You want to be careful," she added, shaking her head slowly and seriously. "Tonight is the night of carnival when all evil wishes are granted!"

My companion lowered his glass.

"To the girl whose beauty has most pleased me!" I cried, as he paused uncertainly. "May I dance with her tonight!"

*"To the girl whose beauty has most pleased me!"* they chanted solemnly in echo. *"My I dance with her tonight!"*

I was partly conscious of the presence of a girl in white who stood behind my hostess. And then we drank.

Shortly afterward, I was separated from my friends, and wandered through the maze of color, laughter, and light. I found Minerva, who had gathered all weight, as well as all wisdom, since last seen by mortals. I dragged her around the floor until fingers were numb from clutching her huge waist and my body was bruised from impact with other dancers; for I admit to being as bad a dancer as she was. Then I excused myself and staggered off, in and out among the dancers, in and out among the spinning reds and magentas and dazzling, vivid greens.

"Monsieur?"

The touch on my shoulder was like a shock. I swung around.

It was the girl who had stood near us when we drank our toast! Her large, black eyes gleamed through a white domino. Her costume was a delicate one of loose ends, hanging irregularly to her bare knees, and her rounded arms were naked and startlingly beautiful. Never had I seen such smooth skin, I thought; never such pale but clear beauty, contrasting with the black hair that—in pleasing disharmony with Grecian costume—fell in wild splendor to her shoulders and beyond.

"Monsieur?"

I controlled my wandering eyes and bowed.

"You asked to dance with me?" she questioned hesitantly.

"Why, I—I . . ."

She raised her hand. "Pardon," she murmured. "I made a mistake."

But I stepped forward. "You make no mistake now, when I ask you, beg you, for a dance!" I said.

The girl smiled, and nodded. I put one arm around her waist, and reached for her right hand. We then started across the floor.

I have said I was a poor dancer. But I doubt if ever a man danced more gracefully than I did with my mysterious partner. It was as if my feet did not move by my own volition, but by the volition of the music—and of her. I never before knew that a mortal could dance as divinely as she did.

Up and down the ball-room, we glided, carried on waves of sound. One by one, the other dancers turned to look at us. Before long, the floor

was half cleared, and lined with couples watching us dance— watching the supple grace of my partner, pressed to my body.

Too soon the dance was over, and I found myself surrounded by friends, all anxious for an introduction to the exquisite girl. I surrendered to etiquette with a sigh; it was hard to part so soon with this charming companion of mine, and I was sure that introducing her to these men, all of whom were better dancers than myself, would be the end.

I took the arm of the man nearest me, and turned to make the necessary introduction— and suddenly I dropped his arm with an exclamation of puzzled astonishment.

The girl had disappeared!

I laughed, rather embarrassed. "Just a minute!" I murmured, and glanced around the room. But there was no sign of her, and I turned back to the young man. "I'm afraid that Mademoiselle walked away while we were talking. As soon as I can find her, I'll gladly introduce you!"

But my companion bowed coldly, and turned to ask another girl to dance.

As for me, however, I was in no mood to dance with any other girl. A thrill, like an electric current, passed through my body as I thought of her, and fighting my way through the dancers, I tried to find her again.

Where *could* she have gone? I hurried across the room, shoving people aside when I discovered a glimpse of white; but I could not find her. The colors of the crowd irritated me. I went to the tables, and, leaning against the wall. I drained glass after glass of cognac and champagne. But that only served to clear my head, and increased my desire for her company.

Finally, unable to stand the music and laughter and scuffling feet, I left the ball-room and made my way along the silent, ill-lit hall, till finally I reached a little room, far away from the voices and music.

It was a den, lighted by a solitary electric lamp on the center table, shaded with a deep-red shade, and filling the room with a dim light, the color of blood. I threw myself in an armchair and stared at the carpet, listening to the far-off music, and dreaming of things, beautiful and terrible . . . things that could never be, now.

Something moved; something stood, motionless, across the table, looking down at me. I raised my eyes.

She was watching me from behind her white mask, and a smile flickered on her lips. Her eyes held a playful, mocking gleam.

"Dreaming," she whispered, and her voice sounded like the cold tinkle of running water. "Dreaming . . ."

I stared at her. I did not stop to ask how she entered without my seeing or hearing her.

"Dreaming of—what?" she asked; and again I saw that flickering smile.

I jumped up. "Of you!" I cried.

She laughed and stepped back, and when I strode over to her, she lifted her hand, as if to hold me off. But I put my arm about her shoulders and tried to draw her toward me, while my body trembled with the intoxication of her beauty.

"Why do you hold me off?" I demanded in a low voice, then, carried away in the romantic spell over me, I blurted: "I love you! I—I would die for one kiss from those beautiful lips!"

Her smile disappeared at those words, and with solemn eyes she regarded me from behind her mask. "Do you mean that?" she asked soberly.

"Mean it?" I repeated. "Why, I . . ."

But she raised her hand once more to stop me. "To kiss me will cost you nothing," she said. "But think carefully before you come with me. *For once having left this house with me, if you refuse to kiss me, you will die!*"

She ceased speaking, and regarded me solemnly. For a second, I saw a queer light flash across her eyes, a light that should have warned me. But I was drunk—drunk with her beauty and with wine—and I considered her words a playful, romantic touch, inspired by the mystery of carnival.

"I die, if I refuse to kiss you?" I repeated, with a laugh. "But I would deserve that! I would deserve ten thousand deaths, if I refused the offer of those beautiful lips!"

She did not laugh at my words. Instead, she started for the door at once. "Come!" she said.

"Let's have another dance," I suggested. "And then . . ."

But she interrupted me, shaking her head. "We haven't time to dance," she whispered. "It will soon be midnight!"

"Well?"

"And then is the end of carnival! Hurry, hurry!"

Down the hall she sped, quickly and silently. Suddenly, as we neared the ball-room, she turned to the right. For one second I had a glimpse of the crowd and lights—of a friend who waved to me. Then I was follow-

ing her down a small flight of steps to a dark, deserted side-street. A dilapidated hack was drawn up to the sidewalk, as if waiting for us.

Why did I hesitate to enter that old hack? Was there something revolting about the driver, with his lack-luster eyes and drawn, bloodless face?

Whatever the cause, my hesitation was only of a moment's duration—and in another minute we were inside. The door was closed by the old man, and the horse started, *clop, clop*, down the still street.

"But we haven't told him where to go!" I objected, turning to the girl who sat beside me.

"He knows," she replied; "he knows." Her voice sounded more than ever like running water. Sitting here in my cell, I can still hear it, cold and clear like the murmur of a cascade. *He knows . . . he knows . . .*

I leaned back, relaxed but thrilled. I was beside her, now. I moved closer, until my body touched hers. I reached for her hand. At first, she demurred, but after a moment she gave it to me.

As I grasped her bare hand, an electric thrill passed through me. It was like a cold shock; and somehow I seemed to feel a pain stabbing my heart.

I continued to hold her hand, though; and after a while that sensation died away. It did not stop; but it was rather as if my heart became numbed by the constantly repeated shocks.

As so we drove along the boulevards, and rattled through the cobbled side-streets. Suddenly we were crossing between the red and yellow lights of a bridge across the Seine; and a few minutes later we were swallowed in the dark and tortuous alleys of the Jewish quarter beyond La Cite.

She drew closer to me, and put her arm around my neck. The touch of it was like ice, and sent electric shocks throughout my body. I turned to kiss her, but she held up her hand.

"Not yet," she whispered.

The hack slowed down, and stopped. I stepped out, aiding my companion to alight, and then reached in my pocket for my money. Immediately, however, the driver started off, and when I called to him, she stopped me with a petulant exclamation.

"But I haven't paid him!" I cried.

"*Ca va*," she answered. "He is paid!"

I shrugged my shoulders, and then looked around me. We were on a wide but dark and deserted boulevard. A quick glance showed me a high wall behind us, running up and down as far as I could see, while

across the street was a line of tenements. I started to cross to them; but once again the girl stopped me.

"This way!" she said, and she led me along the high stone wall till we came to a great iron gate.

As she halted. I stepped back with a cry. "But this . . ." I commenced; and then I stopped.

She had placed her fingers against my mouth, and it was as if my lips were frozen by the touch. "Sh!" she whispered. "We'll wake them, and they mustn't be waked."

I stared unbelieving through the iron bars of the gate, to see, in the dim light of the stars, multitude upon multitude of fantastic stone shapes, stretching away, out of sight. I clutched at the bar, an uneasy feeling running through me; but immediately I sighed with relief when I realized the gate was locked.

At the same instant, my companion touched the bar below my hand. Slowly, slowly, the huge gate swung open, and, hardly realizing what I was doing, I followed her through. The gate swung shut; I heard the click of the lock.

We were locked together in Pere Lachaise Cemetery!

I only vaguely remember our silent trip through those lanes of white stone. I recall suddenly thinking of her words, *If you refuse to kiss me, you will die!* And for a second I halted beneath the towering sepulcher of some famous man, and glanced around me.

Could this be real, this strange adventure in modern, busy Paris? Could it be true that the teeming, practical metropolis was all around this silent city of the dead?

My companion turned to me impatiently. "Come!" she said, in a low voice. "Why do you wait?"

I stared at her beautiful face, still covered by its white mask. Somehow the adventure had lost its zest, though I still looked upon her words of warning as romantic playfulness.

*But I will kiss her, I thought, as I promised. And then I will make my excuses and go home.* And with a nod to the charming creature, I started after her again.

Through row after row of tombstones we hurried; and then, suddenly, she halted before a huge vault. She touched the granite door, and, like the gates of the Cemetery, it slowly opened. With a queer, eager smile, she turned to me. "Follow me!" she said.

My will seemed to be completely dominated by hers. We went inside. The door closed behind us, and I looked around.

We were in a vault, close and damp, and lighted by a dim, red light above a tiny altar. On either side, so near I could have touched them, were piled the caskets of our dead hosts. I turned to my companion, a horrified question on my lips.

She was moving toward me, her hands held out, her head thrown back, a deadly smile on her pale lips. I receded as she advanced, until my back touched the cold granite wall.

"Kiss me!" Her voice was like the tiniest rustling of leaves.

"Good God, girl, are you mad?" I replied.

But she did not appear to hear me. "Kiss me!" she whispered. And now, halting directly before me, she touched her hand to my shoulder. A queer tremor passed over my body.

"Kiss me!"

Her arm encircled my shoulders, and she drew herself close, until her cold, hard breasts pressed against me.

Again I felt my body quiver as her bare arm touched my cheek: pains shot through me, reaching my heart slowly numbing it. And with that feeling came a deadly revulsion toward the girl.

"Stop! Let's get out of here!" I cried, shoving her away.

But her hand did not move. Instead, her other hand crept up to my face, while her embrace became tighter . . . tighter. Her lips approached mine.

I pulled away, impelled by a strange fear and repugnance; but I could not move. It seemed almost, as though she held me with supernatural strength. I felt her breath on my lips; but it was icy, rather than hot.

Suddenly I reached up my hand to keep her face away, and, accidentally, I pushed back her mask. And then I uttered a cry of horror.

*It was the girl of the morgue!* The same marble face; the clear, pale lips; the glint of those eyes as they looked into mine through long lashes! Now I understood my unreasoning revulsion.

I tried to free myself from her grip, but her strength was steady and sure, like a vise's. She drew me gradually closer to her, and her lips rose to mine, while my hands pushed up between us, making a futile effort to hold her away.

And now my fingers reached her throat, and in desperation they circled it.

Minutes passed in silence. She was pulling me to her, while with a queer instinct of self-preservation, my fingers sank into her throat. I felt a numbness conquering me, while my muscles grew weaker and weaker.

And then, suddenly, it was over. Her hands dropped, striking against

something at my waist and sending it to the stone floor with a crash—an incident I scarcely noticed at the time. And now, instead of being a terrible force, she became a heavy weight, held up by my fingers on her throat. I jumped away, and rushed for the door of the vault.

And as I opened it, I heard the clear sound of a striking clock, far away in the direction of the Butte Chaumont. It struck twelve times, and as the last note rolled over the silent graveyard, I heard a rattle in the vault behind me, followed by the muffled sound of a falling body.

Carnival had ended.

In a daze of horror I sped through the aisles of tombstones, climbed over the high wall, and dropped to the deserted boulevard on the other side. I found a taxi, and hurried to my hotel, where I undressed with trembling haste and slipped into bed. It was only after I had lain there a long while, reasoning with myself, that I became calmer.

I had not kissed her; but how could she harm me? I had successfully escaped from Pere Lachaise Cemetery, and be assured I never intended to return there.

"And then," I thought, "tomorrow evening I leave this city, and I'll be careful never to return to it!"

Next day I wandered aimlessly through the city, passing the time till my train was due to pull out of the Gare de l'Est.

I visited the treasures of the Louvre, and the ancient, imposing cathedral of Notre Dame. I sat in cafes, idly sipping drinks. I had lost my watch, somehow or other, within the last twenty-four hours; I didn't know where. But I kept a careful lookout on the neighboring clocks, to make sure I did not lose the train for Austria.

Finally, shortly before four, I found myself near the Jardin des Plantes, and I decided to start for the station, planning to walk there, as I had plenty of time and had already checked my baggage. I started off, down the *quais*, crossing the bridge at La Cite . . . And then, suddenly, I stopped, feeling my heart jump.

I was passing the morgue, the building where *her* body lay yesterday! Had there been a disturbance in connection with its disappearance, I asked myself; or—could that body, by some strange chance, still be . . .

I hesitated, an overwhelming curiosity and an unaccountable uneasiness struggling within me. Nearby, the clock in the tower of the cathedral boomed four times. I still had about an hour and a half before train time.

*After all, I thought, what harm could come of finding out what they*



*think of her disappearance?* And with a shrug, I turned and entered the building.

I noticed a flash of surprise in the keeper's eyes when he recognized me.

"There are more things that Monsieur wishes to see today?" he asked.

"I just thought I'd take a quick look around, before my train leaves," I replied, restraining my excitement.

I followed him inside.

At the door leading to the autopsy chamber, my guide halted. "If you will wait one moment while I telephone, Monsieur . . ." His voice trailed off in a questioning note, as if awaiting my name.

I supplied it. "Monsieur Merrill," I said. "Surely, I'll wait." And I commenced striding up and down the little anteroom, while he disappeared in his little office.

Several minutes passed, and I became more and more uneasy. And at last, as the keeper did not return, I decided to slip inside the place by myself, take one quick look in the room where I had seen *her* body the day before, and then hurry off to my train.

I passed through the cold, silent room where the autopsies were performed; crossed through the "Chamber of Curiosities"; and finally halted at the little door, leading into the still room with its line of marble slabs. And suddenly I surpressed a cry of astonishment.

There, lying on the same slab, in the same posture, was my last night's companion!

Only a second did I hesitate. Then I tiptoed over, and looked down at her.

Yes, everything was the same; the perfect oval face; the skin, white as chiseled marble. Everything was the same—even to two deep marks on her throat!

How long I stared down at that body, in horror and fascination, I do not know. But suddenly it seemed as if her lashes flickered, and she looked up at me from beneath them! At the same moment I heard the keeper's voice, right at my side.

"It will be dissected today," he said.

I swung around, forgetful of everything except the light I had seen in those eyes.

"Good God, man!" I cried. "That girl isn't dead!"

He laughed; and there was something unpleasant in that laugh.

"She's dead all right, Monsieur Merrill," he replied, looking square into my eyes. "She was strangled to death in Pere Lachaise Cemetery!"

I wet my lips, trying to make my voice steady and natural. "And do you know who did it?" I asked in a whisper.

For a long time, the man regarded me without answering. Then: "Perhaps, Monsieur. Nothing is proved as yet, however. French justice moves very slowly, but it gets its man every time!" he said, as he had said the day before. And again, as on yesterday, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

This time, however, it was not the keeper's fingers that tapped me. When I turned around, it was to see a *gendarme*, a stern look in his eyes as he regarded me. And in his hand he held a watch—my watch, with my name engraved in it, which I had dropped the night before in the struggle in the tomb.

There is little more to be said, and less time to say it. They proved conclusively that it was I who choked the girl to death. My watch, found in the tomb (although they discovered it twenty-four hours after they found the body, they decided it must have been there all along); my second visit to the morgue, obviously to see the dead girl again: my nervousness, testified to by the keeper—all added up to prove my guilt. My very attempt to explain the story was counted against me.

But did I kill the girl? Can a man kill the dead? Can murder be committed upon one already murdered?

That, I cannot answer. I only know that Madame Guillotine stands outside my window, and the shadows she casts on the floor of my cell grow darker as the light grows stronger. I know the workmen have ceased their work, and that the windows of neighboring buildings are crowded with drunken, laughing singing men and women, peering out and waiting for the morbid pleasure of watching my decapitation.

I know that muffled footsteps are coming down that corridor toward my cell. In a moment they will lead me out—to the end.

God forgive them! God forgive all men, and me, the most miserable of sinners!



# The Case Of The Doctor Who Had no Business

or

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SECOND

ANONYMOUS NARRATOR

*by Richard A. Lupoff*

RICHARD LUPOFF is the author of *Edgar Rice Burroughs, Master of Fantasy*, an excellent biography-examination of the popular creator of Tarzan, John Carter, Carson Napier, the Pellucidar series, etc. Here is a non-fact article in the best manner of the Baker Street Irregulars, etc., about a meeting between Dr. Watson and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

THE LONDON SKY WAS LOWERING and a near-black gray on a certain night in mid-November of 1911. A stocky, balding man of thirty-odd years made his way down Pall Mall from the St. James's end, his greatcoat lapels turned up against the precipitation-tainted wind, his hamlike fists buried deep in huge pockets stretched to sacklike proportions by those same strong hands.

The big man paused at a door some little distance from the Carlton, bringing forth from one of those pockets a crumpled telegram which had brought him out of his respectable but somewhat shabby hotel on a night reminiscent of those he had grown used to in his native Chicago, some

four thousand miles to the west. Again, his somewhat tired eyes straining against the dim London gaslamps, he read:

*If you would learn something of probable interest and possible profit to you, be so kind as to call upon me this evening at my club. It is the Diogenes—the deskman at your hotel will surely provide directions.*

Probable interest and possible profit, mused the American as he entered the hall; possible profit meant certain interest to him with a growing family at home in America, a string of unsuccessful business ventures and unhappily terminated jobs behind him, and only that \$400 check from Thomas Newell Metcalf for one of his interplanetary daydreams to show for endless hours spent trying to earn food-money with his pen!

Through the glass panelling the American caught a glimpse of a large and luxurious room, in which a considerable number of men were sitting about and reading papers, each in his own small nook. The American entered a small chamber which looked out into Pall Mall, and for the first time beheld the man whose astonishing revelations would change the life of his guest and to a truly unbelievable degree the culture of the entire western world.

This second man, dressed in the formal evening clothes of the proper Briton, was surprisingly like his guest in physical makeup. Not quite as tall as the American, he was equally stocky in figure, powerfully constructed with the hands of one who had spent years working on the torn or ill bodies of his fellow man. A thatch of iron colored hair surmounted his craggy face, which was marked also by steely eyebrows and a moustache of the same metallic tint. As he stepped forward to greet his guest it was obvious that an old wound, long since healed but never forgotten, was tingling him once again.

"Mr. Edgar Rice Burroughs of Chicago," the gray-haired man said, "I am so very pleased that you could come. I trust that you have not found our London weather too damp and chilly for one more used to the sunny plains of America. I fear that even an habitual Londoner like myself finds himself reminded of a certain Jezail bullet on a night such as this one."

The Chicagoan stepped forward to exchange a hearty handshake with his host. "Chicago in November is hardly a place that I would call the sunny plains, Dr. Watson." He paused as a humorous rumble

emerged from deep in his massive frame. "But thank you anyway for your thought. This cold wind makes me feel almost at home, but frankly I'm just as happy to be here in your club. I must admit, though, after a glance at the reading room and your club rules here in the Stranger's Room, it seems like a pretty odd club."

"The Diogenes Club, to quote an esteemed friend of mine, contains the most unsociable and unclubable men in London," returned the doctor, a slight Scottish burr becoming audible as he spoke. "My friend introduced me to the Diogenes Club over twenty years ago. He called it then the queerest club in London, and he was then correct, as he usually is."

"But come, Mr. Burroughs, I am forgetting my manners. Will you take off your greatcoat and make yourself comfortable, or would you rather we make our way to a nearby restaurant or to my home. It is a bit out of the way—that is why I suggested our meeting here—but I am certain that Mrs. Watson would not object to an American visitor on so unpleasant a night."

The big American stirred uncomfortably, still in his damp and heavy outer garment. "I don't want to seem ungracious, doctor, but as you may know I'm only in London for a few days. It was supposed to be a business deal that didn't work out. The trip alone cost me most of the ready cash I could drum up and I'll be heading for home very soon. Now your telegram mentioned something of interest and possible profit, and if you'll pardon my bluntness, would you please tell me what it is."

"My dear Mr. Burroughs," replied Watson, "I assure you that I am not leading you down any blind path. I perhaps failed to mention that I have of late become addicted to your American pulp magazines through an old interest in sea stories, and have even entered into some correspondence with several editors. One of them, Mr. Metcalf of the Munsey concern, recently sent me a letter describing most enthusiastically a tale of your own authorship, which he promises for the February number. It is he who mentioned that you would shortly be visiting our country."

"In honesty, Mr. Burroughs, I regard myself as a colleague of yours. If you read our British periodicals you may have noticed a number of stories in which I claim the pride of authorship, placed over a period of years by my friend Dr. Doyle with such magazines as *Beeton's* and *The Strand*. I have recently become acquainted with a most remarkable narrative, brought to my attention by the elder brother of my very good friend. Unfortunately, my agent informs me that he cannot place the tale

for me; he claims that it is too much like the works of another of his clients, a Mr. Malone, whom he does not wish to offend.

"The story is yours, Mr. Burroughs, if you would care to place it in America; I would rather not see it in a British magazine, at least in its initial appearance. It is a fantastic and perhaps somewhat lurid tale, but I can vouch for its truth. I fear that neither my agent nor his other client would think that I had any business giving it to you, Mr. Burroughs, or to any other. But I disagree, and I ask only that my name not be associated with its publication."

The American, who had listened intently to his host's offer, held his chin characteristically in one brawny hand. The offer indeed interested him, and promised profit if it came up to Munsey's standards. If not—it would cost him nothing to let the old Scotsman spin a yarn. London was a cold and lonesome city for a visitor who had to count every penny, the Diogenes was warm and comfortable. And, he noticed, a well-stocked bar stood unobtrusively in one corner of the room. Still . . .

"What's in it for you?"

"Eh, I don't understand the idiom, Mr. Burroughs. What's in what?" asked Watson.

"I mean, doctor, what do you get out of giving me this story? A percentage if I sell it? You certainly didn't come down here tonight just to meet me and tell me a tall tale!"

"Very well, Mr. Burroughs. I can see that you have had some unpleasant experiences with life to date."

"Indeed I have, doctor. I won't try to fool you. I come from a pretty good family in America but things haven't gone so well the past few years. You can tell that. Look at my clothes. I've had to raise my family in some pretty tough neighborhoods. On one occasion my wife had to pawn her wedding ring to put bread on the table.

"I'm not used to getting something for nothing and I don't think I'm getting it now. What's in it for you?" he asked again.

"Ah, I see," said Watson. "And that is the very thing that interests me in you. All I want is information about America, particularly your city of Chicago and most particularly its, did you say, pretty tough neighborhoods."

"Why?"

"Well," Watson smiled, "let us say that I was planning to write a story with its setting in America. I should not like to commit errors in my background. Such information as the schedules of your street railways can be obtained from guidebooks or the American Almanac, but authen-

tic information on American, er, American criminal organizations is not readily available."

"Is that all," Burroughs laughed, settling back in his easy chair. "Fair enough. A story for the background for a story. Well, who goes first?"

\* \* \* \* \*

And a story it was indeed! For the story told by John H. Watson is one that the visiting American gave to the world under the title *Tarzan of the Apes*. One may be certain that the beverage service of the Diogenes Club was kept busy that evening. And did Mr. Burroughs honor the plea of Dr. Watson, that the latter's name remain unattached to the tale? He did, and yet he managed to provide sufficient clues in the opening paragraphs of his recounting of the *Fuwalda* tragedy and its fantastic sequelae to provide his benefactor, at least, with an assurance that he was remembered, and that the favor was appreciated.

For Burroughs tells us in the opening words of Chapter 1, "Out to Sea", that "I had this story from one who had no business to tell it to me, or to any other. I may credit the seductive influence of an old vintage upon the narrator for the beginning of it, and my own skeptical incredulity during the days that followed for the balance of the strange tale." One sees Burroughs giving back to Watson almost his precise words, and one detects a tongue-in-cheek reminder of the liquid refreshments shared by the two in the Stranger's Room of the Diogenes Club (for one recalls, or at least can find in Watson's *The Greek Interpreter*, that talking was strictly forbidden elsewhere in the club).

Burroughs also tells us that the story is based upon "the yellow, mildewed pages of the diary of a man long dead, and the records of the Colonial Office (which) dovetail perfectly with the narrative of my convivial host." And this raises the question of what either Watson or Burroughs was doing examining the unquestionably confidential records of the British Foreign Office.

The answer is obvious. Watson was himself not a member of the Diogenes Club, nor even was his good friend and sometime fellow lodger Sherlock Holmes. No, Watson's access to the Diogenes Club, although directly provided by Sherlock Holmes, was actually dependent upon Sherlock's elder brother Mycroft Holmes. About Mycroft, in Watson's *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, Sherlock says "His Pall Mall lodgings, the Diogenes Club, Whitehall—that is his cycle." White-

hall is of course the home of the British Foreign Office, the equivalent of our own State Department's Foggy Bottom. And again, in the same story, Watson quotes the following conversation between himself and the great sleuth:

"... By the way, do you know what Mycroft is?"

I had some vague recollection of an explanation at the time of the Adventure of the Greek Interpreter.

"You told me that he had some small office under the British government."

Holmes chuckled.

"I did not know you quite so well in those days. One has to be discreet when one talks of high matters of state. You are right in thinking that he is under the British government. You would also be right in a sense if you said that occasionally he *is* the British government."

And yet again, Watson quotes Sherlock concerning Mycroft: "All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience. We will suppose that a minister needs information as to a point which involves the Navy, India, Canada and the bimetallic question; he could get his separate advices from the various departments upon each; but only Mycroft can focus them all, and say offhand how each factor would affect the other."

Access to Foreign Office records? For Mycroft, the veriest child's play!

But one wonders why Watson made it a point to lure Burroughs—and one can hardly use any other word than lure—to the Diogenes Club, and why he made such a point of permitting himself to reveal the facts in the case of the barkentine *Fuwalda* as he did. His seeking information about the American underworld seems to be a somewhat farfetched explanation. Watson did, of course, set two of his stories largely in the United States: both *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Valley of Fear* contain lengthy retrospective sections set in America, although neither takes place in Chicago. *A Study in Scarlet* was published twenty-four years before the until-now unrevealed meeting with Burroughs. But *The Valley of Fear* was first published late in 1914, it does contain major sections concerning the American underworld, and the information used by Watson might well have been provided partially or completely by Burroughs.

Still, one seeks some greater motivation for Watson's actions, and



especially so in view of the initially perplexing—but ultimately revealing—complicity of Mycroft Holmes in an incident that must in ordinary circumstances be considered one which would hardly interest the corpulent elder sibling of the great deducer.

For in the Holmes-and-Watson tale *His Last Bow*, we find the vital clues! One of the few stories in the Canon not written by Watson, this one is attributed by William S. Baring-Gould in his *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* to Mycroft himself. In the tale Sherlock Holmes tells Watson of his adventures under the pseudonym of Altamont in demolishing a German spy ring in England, the final capture of the master spy Von Bork taking place in August of 1914. Holmes had long been in retirement practicing bee culture and working at literary projects in a small farm upon the South Downs, and in reply to Watson's question regarding his return to work, he says:

"Ah, I have often marvelled at it myself. The Foreign Minister alone I could have withstood, but when the Premier also deigned to visit my humble roof—! . . . It has cost me two years, Watson, but they have not been devoid of excitement. When I say that I started my pilgrimage at Chicago, graduated in an Irish secret society at Buffalo, gave serious trouble to the constabulary at Skibbareen, and so eventually caught the eye of a subordinate agent of Von Bork, who recommended me as a likely man, you will realize that the matter was complex."

How complex it was, even *His Last Bow* does not reveal. Two years culminating in 1914 bring Holmes's pilgrimage, beginning in Chicago, back to 1912. Watson's meeting with Burroughs took place late in 1911. Holmes acted at the entreaty of the Foreign Minister and the Premier; Mycroft on that occasion very likely "was" the British government. Edgar Rice Burroughs was in London in pursuit of "a business deal which promptly fell through;" in all likelihood the entire "deal" was arranged by one Holmes or the other specifically to bring Burroughs to England. And although the deal "promptly fell through," Burroughs' receipt of *Tarzan of the Apes* must be rated as the grandest consolation prize in all the history of literature.

Continuing to examine motives, one notes that Sherlock Holmes was preparing himself for a perilous masquerade beginning in the Chicago underworld. He desperately needed advance information. It is known that Edgar Rice Burroughs knew the Chicago underworld well—one need only examine *The Efficiency Expert* or *The Girl from Farris's* to see as much. And Burroughs was obviously a man capable of keen observation and graphic description. What better source of data! Yet Sherlock was

reluctant to question Burroughs personally. Perhaps his motive was an unwillingness to leave his beloved bees any sooner than necessary, or more likely, despite his mastery of the art of disguise, Sherlock did not wish to risk meeting in London a man he might later encounter, in another identity, in America. And so the faithful Watson was called upon once more to enact the role of the unknowing but invaluable cat's-paw.

We know of the success of the bargain. "A story for the background for a story." *Tarzan of the Apes* for *The Valley of Fear* . . . and the destruction of the critically dangerous Von Bork spy ring in England three years later.

All of this ratiocination may seem somewhat farfetched to the reader unfamiliar with Holmesian scholarship, and so a further examination of the two Canons involved may, by providing the corroborative evidence which is so plentiful, prove valuable in supporting the clear and firm identification of the second anonymous narrator of *Tarzan of the Apes* as none other than John H. Watson, MD. (For the first anonymous narrator is obviously Edgar Rice Burroughs himself.)

Let us, then, first of all consider the question of Tarzan's identity. As was pointed out both in Pastor Hein's introduction to the first edition of *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* and in the main text of that volume, Tarzan's "real" name is *not* John Clayton at all. In *Tarzan of the Apes* Burroughs refers to "a certain young Englishman, whom we shall call John Clayton, Lord Greystoke." This is obviously not his real name, which is never revealed, although we are told that "Political ambition had caused him to seek transference from the army to the Colonial Office . . ." . . . and into the province of Mycroft Holmes!

*Tarzan of the Apes* clearly begins on a bright May morning in 1888, at which time "Clayton" "had been married a scarce three months to the Hon. Alice Rutherford."

Not very long before this occurrence another encounter involving John Clayton had taken place. Sherlockian scholars generally agree on dating this other incident late in September, but do not agree on the year . . . September 26, 1887 seems the most likely date. Watson—who, after all, first gave Burroughs the saga of John Clayton—describes the earlier incident in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Chapter 5, "Three Broken Threads." To quote a portion of Watson's narration:

The ring at the bell proved to be something even more satis-

factory than an answer, however, for the door opened and a rough-looking fellow entered who was evidently the man himself.

"I got a message from the head office that a gent at this address had been inquiring for No. 2704," said he. "I've driven straight from the Yard to ask you to your face what you had against me."

"I have nothing in the world against you, my good man," said Holmes. "On the contrary, I have half a sovereign for you if you will give me a clear answer to my questions."

"Well, I've had a good day and no mistake," said the cabman with a grin. "What was it you wanted to ask, sir?"

"First of all your name and address, in case I want you again."

"John Clayton, 3 Turpey Street, the Borough. My cab is out of Shipley's Yard, near Waterloo Street."

Notice, then, how cleverly Mycroft presents his agent to Sherlock, providing for the presence of the trusting Watson.

A complete dossier for Holmes's information, on the undercover agent's assumed identity, appearance, occupation, home and business addresses! What mysterious case of the "young English nobleman" was working on in behalf of Mycroft—and Whitehall—we do not know. That it was connected with the Baskerville case (which involved Canada and was hence of concern to Mycroft) is possible but by no means certain. At any rate, by the following February "Clayton" was married; by May he and his bride were aboard the barkentine *Fuwalda*, "which was to bear them to their final destination.

"And here John, Lord Greystoke, and lady Alice, his wife, vanished from the eyes and from the knowledge of men."

Consider now the following reference by Watson in *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, first published in 1922, long after Burroughs had chronicled the tragedy of the *Fuwalda*: "No less remarkable is that of the cutter *Alicia*, which sailed one spring morning into a small patch of mist from where she never again emerged, nor was anything further ever heard of herself and her crew."

A cutter is not exactly the same sort of sailing ship as is a barkentine. The latter, a common reference book states, is "a three-masted vessel having the fore-mast square-rigged and the others fore-and-aft rigged." While a cutter, the same volume tells us, is "a fore-and-aft rigged vessel with one mast and a jib and forestaysail." Since Watson was quite a fan of nautical fiction, while Burroughs was more interested in horsemanship and military matters, it seems likely that the *Fuwalda/Alicia* was indeed

a cutter rather than a barkentine. One may surmise that the author of *Tarzan of the Apes* recalled Watson's description of fore-and-aft rigging but strangely forgot the simpler statement of the number of masts on the ship, and called the cutter a barkentine. Watson's later passing reference may well have been a friendly dig in return for Burroughs' reference to "the seductive influence of an old vintage" upon Watson.

As for the names of the ship in the two stories, one can only wonder whether Watson was deliberately "coding" the identification, or whether his memory was playing tricks upon the doctor some thirty-two years after the event of the cutter's disappearance and eleven years after Watson had first mentioned the event to Burroughs. At any event, we have the cutter—not barkentine—*Fuwalda*, carrying John, Lord Greystoke, and Lady Alice, his wife . . . transformed into the cutter *Alicia*. The reference is obvious.

And if it was merely a quirk of memory, let us not deride the doctor too unkindly, for as early as 1913 in *The Return of Tarzan*, Edgar Rice Burroughs gave the name of Lord Tennington's ocean-going yacht as the *Lady Alice*. Heaven knows what the real name of that vessel could have been! *The Friesland?*

And so it went, over the years, Burroughs chronicling the saga of Tarzan, Watson recording the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, and the two impinging upon one another only in ways too subtle for the casual observer to detect. There was, of course, the appearance of Tarzan's father in Watson's *Hound of the Baskervilles*, and Burroughs' passing reference to Sherlock Holmes in *The Son of Tarzan*, but except for these two namings of names one must learn to observe and deduce, as in the case of the *Fuwalda*, the *Lady Alice*, and the *Alicia*, the visits of Tarzan to England and America over the years, his adoption of formal detection techniques in *Tarzan and the Jungle Murders*, and other references yet to be brought to light.

One can only wonder whether Burroughs and Watson kept up a correspondence, ever again exchanged visits. One can wonder whether Sherlock ever made it a point to meet the son of his old acquaintance John Clayton. One may wonder, but I fear that one will never know.



# The Feline Phantom

*by Gilbert Draper*

AN OLD HOUSE MADE OVER into a modern apartment building is scarcely the place where one would expect to meet with a shocking experience; yet it was in the hundred-dollar-a-month home of my friend Horace Banks that the incident occurred, in 1931.

Banks and I had been brought up together, for our respective families purchased adjoining houses before we had reached our teens, and it was from these premises that we used to set off for school together every morning. In later life, as often happens with childhood chums, we drifted apart, Banks going abroad to study foreign languages and I entering upon a journalistic career at home, which, incidentally, is my present means of livelihood. When he returned after an absence of nearly a decade, I found him so changed intellectually that the old relationship was impossible, though we still remained the best of friends.

Always of a studious nature, Banks had drifted from philology to psychology, and his knowledge of these and countless other 'ologies impressed me not a little.

"Humbug" and "rubbish", Banks called the strange tale of metempsychosis. And yet . . . And yet . . .

He had been made an orphan by the sudden death of his father, a prominent surgeon, who, being a widower and having no other children, had left him with sufficient means to pursue his hobby of research. We dined together about once a fortnight, sometimes in his apartment and sometimes at the home of my aunt, with whom I boarded. Otherwise we seldom met, for his ways were not mine.

On the night of which I write, we had finished dinner and were enjoying his highly palatable port before a log fire in the living room, when, after a long silence, he said, apropos of nothing in particular: "Harvey, how about letting me put you up for the night?"

The invitation was so unusual that I stared at him, I had not slept under Banks' roof since our school days.

"What in the world for?" I asked.

"When I tell you," he answered, smiling, "you may not want to. The truth is, I'm afraid to sleep here alone tonight."

Not having known my friend, you will not be able to appreciate the absurdity of his remark; but the idea of Banks being afraid to sleep alone so appealed to my sense of the ridiculous that I loudly guffawed. Banks, I should explain, was a most powerful man, with muscles like iron and a constitution envied by all who knew him. If he had any nerves, they were always under perfect control.

"Sorry, old man," I apologized. "I didn't mean to be rude, but you rather surprised me."

"And I'm going to surprise you still more," he returned, his face as solemn as ever.

Forthwith, he embarked upon an account of one of his experiences abroad that revealed to me a new Banks—a romantic Banks and an exceedingly credulous one. It was the story of an aristocratic Persian cat and its untimely end.

"This damn cat," Banks said, "attracted me the moment I set eyes on her. She was a beauty, I can tell you, with a magnificent tail and eyes like glittering nuggets. I bought her in the slums of Cairo from a ragged street merchant whose only wares were a number of good, bad and indifferent cats. When I had paid him for Cina—that was the beast's name—he insisted upon dragging me into his filthy stall to warn me to protect her with my very life. For, he solemnly swore, were she to meet an unnatural death, whoever owned her at the time would be visited by her spirit on the first anniversary of her death. On the second anniversary, he avowed, the said owner would himself perish miserably.

"Although my common sense told me the old humbug was talking

rubbish, I listened to him, at first with amused tolerance, but later with real interest.

"Many years before, so the story went, Cina had come into the possession of one of Persia's greatest physicians, a man who combined modern scientific methods with some of the secrets of ancient sorcery—a rather sinister old gentleman, I gathered. At any rate, shortly after the advent of this cat into his household, he began to devote more and more time to practices that should never have attracted a reputable medical man. The number of his patients began to dwindle, not because his skill had diminished, but because they took exception to the way he treated them. In other words, they objected to being hypnotized instead of anesthetized."

"You mean he could render people insensible to pain by hypnotizing them?" I broke in.

"That's what my informant said. He told me that the doctor, after dabbling for a time in hypnotism, began delving into the mysteries of metempsychosis, which has to do with the transmigration of the soul after death into the body of another man or lower animal."

"Well," continued Horace, knocking his pipe against the grate, "things went from bad to worse and Cina, whose beautiful body was admired by her master, was made to play an important part in his experiments; and, while he didn't harm her physically, she must have endured the most unheard of tortures mentally, as a later happening proved."

"This sounds like the prologue to a first-class horror story," I put in flippantly, for I had a suspicion that the learned Horace was pulling my leg.

"That's precisely what it is," he replied, ignoring my levity. "And I want to assure you, Harvey, that I'm not telling you this for your entertainment. I'm really serious, and I'm in a worse predicament than I ever imagined a human being could find himself in."

I tried to look sympathetic. Banks' lugubrious tone was getting tiresome.

"One day," he went on, "a celebrated Indian fakir, who happened to be traveling through Persia, heard of these exploits and, most likely jealous of his own reputation as a master of magic, decided to investigate. Accordingly he disguised himself as a wealthy victim of some obscure disease and called on the doctor for advice, fearing that if he revealed his identity he would not be admitted. At first the ruse succeeded, but when he attempted to go into the details of his pretended sickness, the wizard exposed him as an impostor. Heated words were

exchanged, in the course of which the fakir accused the doctor of being a charlatan. At this unpardonable insult, the latter volunteered to give a demonstration of his proficiency in metempsychosis.

"Just at this moment Cina emerged from a corner where she had been sleeping and walked with dignified tread across the room. As she passed her master, she recoiled, spitting viciously. I have already said she had ample reason to fear and hate him.

The contemptuous fakir pointed triumphantly at the cat. 'The very thing,' he cried mockingly. 'I have no objection to temporarily possessing the body of that comely animal, and I am sure its soul would welcome the novelty of a brief sojourn in mine.' 'As you will,' replied the doctor craftily, seizing Cina by the scruff of the neck and avoiding, as the result of much practice, the waving talons that sought to tear his flesh. After chloroforming the unfortunate animal he placed the inert body on the floor and ordered his visitor to lie down beside it.

"Harvey, I do not expect you to believe the outcome of that grotesque seance, and were it not for what has followed, I, too, would scoff. How he accomplished it, no one will ever know, but a veritable miracle was performed by that Persian doctor. Following God knows what rites, the soul of the fakir entered the body of the cat and for a time lay dormant; but, as soon as Cina's soul, or spirit, had taken possession of the man's body, it realized its new strength, and, with the realization, came a desire for vengeance against the one who had subjected her feline form to such torment.

"A bitter struggle ensued, during which the doctor was badly bitten and scratched. To save himself, he seized a heavy scalpel with a razor-like edge which happened to be lying on a nearby table and felled his antagonist with a single, desperate blow. In his terror he struck hard, and the fakir, or Cina, if you will, fell dead with an almost severed head.

"As the eyes of the cat slowly opened, the arch-magician became aware that behind them was an imprisoned soul, doomed to inhabit an animal's body. Aye, he had punished the fakir nicely for his insult! Now to rid himself of the creature, which might prove dangerous.

"Darting from the room, he ran out into the street, determined to rid himself of the cat. And here is where Fate took a hand, for who should be passing the house but my cat merchant with two of his pets in a cage on his back! Imagine his astonishment when the wild-eyed physician offered to give him a beautiful Persian for nothing!



"Of course the man gladly accepted. But as he was turning away, the doctor, doubtless because he knew that the animal's death would release his victim's soul, warned him that if any harm came to Cina, whoever possessed her at the time would be haunted by her spirit on the first anniversary of her death and again the following year, when the phantom would cause him to die in agony. Being superstitious and anxious to make his escape, and convinced he was dealing with a madman, the cat merchant readily promised to repeat the warning to all prospective buyers.

"It was not until years afterwards that a dismissed servant of the doctor, who had overheard his fantastic conversation with the fakir, told the story out of malice. Like ripples on a pond the tale spread until eventually it reached the ears of Cina's new master, who for some reason or other had refrained from selling her. I fancy, being superstitious, he had decided to keep the incomparable cat he had obtained for nothing in the hope that she would bring him further good fortune. Unluckily for me, I came upon him at a time when he was hard-pressed for money."

Horace paused to relight his pipe. My own had lain unheeded on the table beside me since shortly after he had started his idiotic reminiscences. To tell the truth, I was getting uneasy. Either he was trying to be facetious at my expense or something had happened to upset his reason.

"Harvey," he said suddenly, "I know that you are thinking this is rot, and I don't blame you. But please hear me out.

"With Cina in a basket under my arm I returned to my hotel. By a strange coincidence, I had been perusing an excellent book on metaphysics by a learned German scholar, who had devoted several chapters to phenomena similar to that recounted by the cat merchant. Under the circumstances, it is hardly to be wondered at that I spent the remainder of the day engrossed in the volume.

"Indeed, so interested did I become that I neglected to go downstairs for dinner, and it was nearly midnight when I finally laid the thing down.

"As I sat there musing over what I had read, my eye chanced to fall upon Cina, who was curled up on the foot of the bed fast asleep. Was it possible, I asked myself, that that sleek body harbored the soul of the fakir?

"At last, thoroughly weary, I went to bed. Cina looked so comfortable

that I was loath to disturb her, though afterwards I wished I had, God knows.

"Hours later I became conscious of an inexplicable weight on my chest. With a great effort I opened my sleepy eyes, but when I beheld the ferocity in the glaring yellow orbs of the animal that crouched over my prostrate body, I became stiff with fright.

"Well, I didn't hesitate. I flung the bed clothes over that poor bewitched cat before she could spring. I had to do it; there was not time for a less brutal counter-attack. Yet even now I shudder when I think of her death struggles.

"However, it was not until the squirming form beneath me had lain still for several minutes that I ventured to slide off the bed. I stood soaked in sweat, my body trembling in every limb as I stared with horror at that heap of bedding. Then, as God is my judge, the air was rent by a terrifying human groan. That was the last straw. I collapsed senseless on the floor, where I was found the next morning by a maid.

"For several days I tossed delirious on a hospital cot, mumbling God knows what rubbish. When eventually I recovered, I sought forgetfulness in other lands, and for months I wandered disconsolately through Europe. In time the adventure became only a dim memory, though at intervals my sleep was disturbed by nightmarish dreams of huge cats that prowled around my bed or sat back on their haunches regarding me with fearful saucer-like eyes. Naturally I had never taken the Persian doctor's warning seriously, and by the end of the first year I had ceased to even think of it. But the monstrous business was by no means finished, as I was soon to learn.

"One night, while staying at a quaint hostelry in Copenhagen, I retired, as was my wont, about midnight. Nothing unusual had happened since the Cairo incident, and I was in a particularly peaceful frame of mind. Certainly I did not expect to be awakened before morning, so you can imagine my sensations when I was aroused after a few hours' sleep by an uncomfortable weight on my chest. As on the previous occasion, I did not immediately open my eyes, but lay, wondering drowsily what was the matter. The first thought to cross my mind was that I had too many bed clothes on, and I was about to toss some of them off when a paralyzing permonition of danger gripped my heart. I lay there in the pitch blackness like a contemptible coward, afraid to open my eyes.

"Gradually a peculiar noise began to beat an insistent tattoo on my

eardrums. At first it sounded like the faint hissing a radiator sometimes makes when a little steam is escaping; but, as I listened, with painfully thumping heart, it began to sound horribly like the breathing of a maddened animal—like that of a cat, for example!"

"Horace," I broke in, now thoroughly alarmed, "if this is a joke it has gone far enough. I enjoy a good yarn as much as anybody, but I draw the line when it is told as you are telling this one. Why, you look like a ghost! For Heaven's sake, man, snap out of it!"

"Damn your infernal stupidity, Harvey!" he cried angrily. "I'm not a fool and I don't take you for one. Will you let me finish?"

I subsided uneasily, convinced my friend was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and permitted him to bring his preposterous story to a conclusion without again interrupting him.

"No man ever opened his eyes with greater reluctance than I did. I had to look, though, even when I knew I should see something ghastly."

Horace paused dramatically. "Harvey," he continued, in a slow, impressive voice, "I saw a pair of familiar yellow eyes. They were about a foot from my face. That was all. Apparently the thing didn't have a body. Yet I could feel the weight of something just over my heart—a dead weight, if you understand me, without movement.

"My hands were involuntarily clutching the bed clothes in such a manner that I could easily fling them over the thing on top of me, just as I had over the live Cina the year before. But what was the use? You can't smother a ghost; you can't suffocate something that isn't real. Even in my terrified state, that much was clear.

"Presently came an idea, and no sooner did it occur to me that I acted. Picture me huddled up with my head under the bed clothes, waiting tremulously for that feline phantom to go away! Undignified and absurd, granted, but at least I had escaped temporarily. I could still feel the weight, though it seemed to have shifted. The next minute something was walking over me, back and forth across the bed as if in search of a hole in the covers. Soon my breath became labored, my supply of oxygen being limited; but I would have suffered death rather than move my head from beneath the comparative safety of the bed clothes.

"Harvey, that experience was awful, and I am sure that if I had not heard it jump to the floor the sound of padded footsteps retreating towards the window, I should have died from suffocation. That would have been retribution with a vengeance, wouldn't it?"

"Well, you won't be surprised to hear that I waited for the dawn in

what a writer like you would call a cold sweat of terror. I was afraid to get out of bed for fear of being attacked.

"That's all, Harvey, except that tonight's the night I'm to have a second visit from the departed Cina, who not unnaturally has a grudge against me. It was exactly a year ago that I slept in that Danish hotel, and I am sure the ghost of that cursed cat will come again tonight as I am that you're sitting there. That's why I want you here with me."

For several minutes after Horace had ceased speaking there was silence between us. My heart was full of pity mingled with contempt for the big man opposite me who had so let his nerves get the better of him that he had become convinced of the reality of some ordinary nightmare. Horace's hallucinations I put down to an unwise supper. Not for a moment did I believe his story about that night in Copenhagen. Either he had had a bad dream or some stray cat had entered his room in search of a sleeping place. In the latter event, he was hardly to be blamed for fancying that Cina's ghost was paying the first of her two promised visits, especially as it happened to be the exact anniversary of her death. That, however, was simply coincidence.

Well, I certainly was not going to become a party to any such foolishness as sitting up to wait for the ghost of a dead cat. Horace, I felt, should be ashamed of himself for making so ridiculous a request. Probably he would apologize in the morning.

When I bade him goodnight a little later, he helped me into my overcoat without a word. I perceived he was offended that I would not humor him.

I was awakened about six o'clock the following morning by the telephone, which is on a table beside my bed. Fumbling for the receiver, I mumbled a sleepy "hello."

"Is that you, Harvey?" I heard my editorial chief inquire briskly. "Say, you'd better hurry over to your friend Horace Banks' place. He's dead: died during the night. Looks like he'd had a fit in bed. Write us a good story, will you? Oh, and by the way, play up this part of it. Some stray cat must have got in through the window, probably looking for a place to sleep. They say you can see its footmarks on the sill. Too bad, eh!"



# The Consuming Flame

by Paul Ernst

(author of *Hollywood Horror*, *The Man Who Chained the Lightning*, etc.)

## *I. The Night Explodes*

THE SERVICE TELEPHONE RANG. The chauffeur, in whipcord pants and shirt sleeves, picked it up. The crisp voice of Besson, president and majority stockholder of Besson Motors, sounded out. "Carlisle, is the sedan in running order?"

The chauffeur stared at the phone with bulging eyes. His gasp sounded out. Then he collected his wits, and said: "Of course, sir."

"Bring it around to the side entrance, then," Besson ordered. "Full tank, check everything. I'm going to drive down to Cleveland. I'll drive it myself."

Carlisle kept staring at the phone in that unbelieving way. He opened his lips several times as if to express the amazement showing on his face. But no words came.

A violet flash—then the speeding car and its inhabitants vanished from sight, leaving only a charred spot on the concrete of the highway . . .

"Well? Do you hear me?" snapped Besson.

"Yes, sir," responded the chauffeur. "Certainly, sir. The sedan will be at the side entrance at once, sir."

He hung up, swore in profound perplexity, then shrugged into his whipcord coat and went downstairs to the garage.

He got into the sedan, an immense, gleaming thing built specially in the shops of the Besson Motors Company, and sent it out of the wide doors and down the graveled lane to the portico of the Besson mansion.

He got out of the car and waited respectfully for the master to appear. But while he waited, with a bemused scowl, he felt the radiator.

It was quite warm. The car *had* been used recently.

Besson came out of the door, followed by a footman who carried a small bag and a briefcase. Besson was a short man, heavy-set, inclined to rather loud checked suits which would have looked humorous on his squat frame had it not been for the quiet, tremendous power lying obviously in eye and jaw. No one laughed after looking into the motor magnate's face!

"Everything ready?" said Besson.

"Yes, sir," nodded the chauffeur.

Once more he seemed to be on the verge of saying something further, but once more he repressed himself.

Besson got into the car. The footman put the bag and case in the rear. Besson nodded brusquely to the two servants, and sent the great machine out of the drive and swirling onto the street with the practiced rapidity that was still his after his early years as a race-track driver before he made his money. The sedan hummed out of sight in an incredibly short time.

Carlisle turned to the footman. In the chauffeur's eyes was something like fear, and small beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. "Well, I'll be damned!" he said.

"What's up?" asked the footman.

"The boss! Either he's going crazy — or I am."

"Why?"

"An hour ago," explained Carlisle, "the chief came out to the garage. I was washing down the town car. He called to me to ask if the sedan was checked, and I said it was. He got into it and drove out of the garage with it. He had a bag, and I thought he was starting his Cleveland trip then. It seemed kind of funny that he came out to the garage

himself for the car instead of having me bring it around, but I didn't pay too much attention to it."

"He started out an hour ago, with a bag?" said the footman, staring. "That's funny."

"It isn't as funny as what happened next," Carlisle said. "In twenty-five minutes I heard a car roll into the garage—I was upstairs in my rooms. I came down, and there was the sedan. So I figured the boss had changed his mind and wasn't going to Cleveland after all."

"I went back upstairs, and three minutes ago, I'll be damned if he didn't phone out, ask if the sedan was checked, and tell me to bring it around to the side door here—just as if he hadn't been out in the thing himself a little while ago and *knew* it was checked and ready for the trip."

"First the boss came out and drove away himself?" repeated the footman. "Then, just now, he called for the car to be sent around, just as though he hadn't been in it the first time? That *is* funny! In fact—it's impossible."

Carlisle stared at him, forehead wrinkled.

"For the last hour," said the footman, "Mr. Besson has been in his rooms. I overheard him dictating a few letters to his private secretary, and I helped his man pack his bag. So he couldn't have driven out of the garage and then back again!"

The chauffeur bit his lip. He was silent for a long time as the meaning of the statement came home to him.

"He didn't drive out of the garage an hour ago and come back again twenty-five minutes later? Then who did? And why?"

The footman shook his head.

"Did you see the boss's face?"

"No," admitted the chauffeur. "As I said, I was washing down the town car. I heard his voice, and saw his body as he climbed in behind the wheel. But it was his voice! I'll swear to that."

"Well," said the footman slowly, "somebody besides Besson took that car out for half an hour. I wonder—if they did something to it?"

The chauffeur wiped sweat from his forehead. "It—it felt all right as I drove it out of the garage. But if a steering-rod was sawed half in two, or something . . ."

He stopped. Besson was a notoriously fast driver. He burned the roads at ninety miles an hour in his frequent trips to cities near Detroit.

"Maybe nothing was done to the car," said the footman through lips inclined to be a little pale. "Better not say anything, anyhow, about this. It might get you into trouble."

Carlisle nodded. He went back to the garage. But on his face a look of foreboding grew.

With all his heart he hoped the sedan hadn't been tampered with. But common sense told him it must have been. A man wouldn't take risk and trouble to get it off the Besson property for half an hour without some reason behind the act.

"Who took that car out?" he whispered to himself as he went up to his quarters again. *"And what did they do to it?"*

Out along the road to Cleveland, Besson sent the great sedan leaping like a live thing, unaware of the short trip it had made before he stepped into it. It was only eight in the evening. The road was fairly crowded with traffic, so Besson did not hit his highest road speed. The speedometer needle quivered at seventy.

Besson frowned a little in a puzzled way. And he *was* puzzled. He squirmed uneasily behind the wheel of the car.

His nerves felt as though each tiny end were being filed. And his hair was acting queerly. It had a tendency to rise on his scalp, prickling and itching as if it had turned to fine wires.

He took his hands off the wheel for an instant to see if there were a short circuit somewhere in the ignition system that was sending a little current up the steering-column and into the wheel. His sensation was vaguely of the kind induced by a slight electric shock. But lifting his hands from the wheel did not lessen the sensation. And glancing down at the seat beside him he saw that a bit of paper from a torn cigarette package clung to the velous as tissue paper clings to a comb that has just been drawn through hair.

Traffic cleared. Frowning, Besson pressed harder on the accelerator. The car leaped up to ninety-four miles an hour, roaring down the road with a sonorous, low-pitched scream.

No man saw what happened after that. A dozen pairs of eyes were drawn to the spot a second later; but none observed the entire proceeding.

At one moment the special-built car was racing along the concrete. At the next there was an enormous flare of violet-colored light—and there was no car there. Furthermore, there was no trace anywhere on the road or along the road that such a car had existed.

Besson, the sedan and everything else, had utterly disappeared.

A woman behind the counter of a roadside stand was the first of the dozen witnesses to break the awful silence following the blinding violet flare in which a man and a car had vanished utterly from the earth.



"Oh, my God!" she screamed.

It snapped the spell. Truck drivers, pleasure car owners, proprietors and patrons of the roadside stands near by, raced to the spot.

"My God!" the woman screamed again, shrill and high.

The men did not cry out, nor did they say anything. They simply looked first at each other and then at the road.

A long black streak of charred concrete was all the evidence left of the speeding sedan.

## *2. The Death Engine*

IN THE EXPERIMENTAL ROOM of the Dryer Automobile Corporation, three men stood looking at a roadster.

Outside, in the great shop, all was thunder and clangor. The big machines that turned out the production stream of Detroit's third largest motor factory were so expensive that they had to be run day and night; so that now, at ten in the evening, the uproar was as great as at ten in the morning.

But here in the corner laboratory the roar penetrated only as a murmur, and in critical silence the three men examined the roadster.

It was a tremendous thing. The wheelbase was nearly a hundred and sixty inches. The hood sloped off and away from the windshield as if the power of a locomotive were under it—which was almost the truth. It gleamed with the finest and latest of enamels; a toy to delight the heart of a rajah.

"Everything is all right?" said the chief engineer to a mechanic in dungarees near by.

"Listen for yourself," said the mechanic, switching on the motor.

Standing right next to the hood, you could scarcely hear the engine. The engineer nodded. A sour look was on his face. "Twenty-eight thousand, that thing cost to build. Well, it's some car. It'll do about a hundred and forty, won't it?"

"A hundred and forty-eight," said the mechanic.

The engineer grinned bleakly. "And Dryer's pampered son will use the speed, too. This is certainly a birthday present! When is it to be delivered?"

"First thing in the morning," replied the assistant. "I got orders two hours ago. I'm to drive it up in front of the Dryer house and leave it to 'surprise' Tom Dryer. Though he knows all about it, of course."

The head engineer turned to the mechanic. "Stick a canvas over it,"

he ordered. "It would be a shame to get a scratch on papa's darling's plaything. I'll lock up."

The mechanic draped a great canvas, such as painters use, over the enormous roadster. The men went to the door of the experimental room, and stepped out into the clangor of the shop. The engineer locked it.

But behind that closed door was not emptiness.

As the lock clicked on the room and the roadster, a shadow stirred in a far corner near a work-bench. The shadow was that of a man who had been lurking in there for over an hour.

The man, a shapeless outline in the darkness, went toward the roadster. He lifted the canvas from over the hood and raised the hood catch. From his pocket he took what appeared to be an aluminum box, a third as big as a cigarbox. He attached it to the reverse side of the dashboard.

From the box trailed four fine wires. One went to each wheel of the roadster. Then the man worked with the wheels. To each spoke was attached an almost invisible, flexible fin of colorless material. The fine trailing wires were adjusted so that the ends would almost touch the fins on the spokes as the wheels whirled.

The shadowy figure fastened the hood down and replaced the canvas. It glided toward the door. Over the penetrating roar of the busy shop outside sounded a faint laugh. It was an icy, blood-chilling sound, twice repeated. Then the door opened as if it had never been locked—closed again, this time on a room containing no human thing, but in which was a roadster that was far indeed from being the same mechanism as that which had been hand-built in the shop.

It was hardly fifteen minutes later when the door was opened once more and the lights switched on.

The chief engineer and another man were in the doorway. The other man was young, barely twenty-four. He was blond, dressed in a tuxedo, with no hat on and with his hair rumpled a little. His blue eyes were too bright, and he swayed a bit on his feet.

"I'm going to take her out, I tell you," he was insisting to the engineer. "It's my car, isn't it? Why should I wait till tomorrow?"

"Your father will be very disappointed if you don't wait till tomorrow and use it then, on your birthday, for the first time," urged the engineer.

But the man, young Tom Dryer, only shrugged. "I want it tonight. And what I say goes around here. Wheel it out."

"But . . ."

"Wheel it out, I tell you!"

The engineer shrugged. He got into the roadster, after taking off the shrouding canvas. A side door of the laboratory opened. He drove the roadster out and onto the cinder driveway leading from the fenced factory grounds.

"Boy, that's a job!" said Tom Dryer, his too bright eyes taking in the lines and power of the machine. He got in behind the wheel. The motor boomed.

"So long."

The young man waved his hand to the engineer, and drove off. The watchman at the yard gate barely had time to open the portals for the flying thing. Then young Dryer was out and off.

The engineer shook his head. His face was pale.

"*So long*," the boy had said. And it seemed to the older man that the words, and the parting wave of the hand, were prophetic. The farewell given for a long trip. A long, long one, perhaps.

"Drunk, and at the wheel of a thing that will go nearly a hundred and fifty miles an hour," the engineer whispered to himself. "I certainly hope . . ."

He turned back into the experimental laboratory without finishing the sentence.

An hour later, at a little after midnight, the great new roadster fled like a silent, tremendous night bird over the open highway. Swaying a little behind the wheel was young Dryer. Beside him sat a girl with unnatural-looking red hair, and predatory gray eyes set in a face as flawlessly regular—and as uninspiring-looking—as a beauty on a magazine cover.

"Seventy," said Tom Dryer. "And you don't feel it any more than if you were going twenty. Wait till we hit an open stretch! I'll show you speed, baby!"

"Let's be satisfied with seventy," urged the girl. She was a little pale under her rouge as she glanced from the speedometer to his face.

"Don't be like that," laughed the boy. "That's an old maid's speed. I want to show you what this buggy can *do*!"

The girl was silent for a moment. She moved restlessly in the seat. "Say," She exclaimed finally, "do you feel funny?"

"How do you mean?" said Dryer.

"Kind of itchy and nervous," said the girl.

"Nope."

"Well, I do. And my hair feels like—like it was being pulled by someone. I don't like it. And I don't like going so fast on a road where you're apt to go round a corner and meet a car piling toward you."

"Like this?" laughed Dryer, steering around a curve on the wrong side of the road with screaming tires. "Hang on, kid! This is a straight stretch ten miles long. Bet we can make it in five minutes."

The needle went to eighty-five.

"Tommy," shrilled the girl. "Don't, please! I—I feel . . ."

"Hang on!" Dryer repeated, shouting over the rush of wind. "You'll never have another ride like this!"

The needle went to a hundred.

"Tommy!" shrieked the girl. "I—oh, *God* . . ."

The night was split by a violet flare that could be seen for miles. Like concentrated lightning it burst forth, shattering the darkness along the road.

It blazed into being with no warning, persisted for about a half-second, and died as suddenly.

And on the road, where the great roadster had been, with a man and girl in it, was nothing. A charred black streak showed. That was all.

### 3. *Satan Schemes*

IN A TOWER OF THE BOOK HOTEL next noon, two men sat talking.

One, thin, of average height, with thin gray hair and eyes lidded by colorless flaps that looked like the membranes veiling the eyes of a bird of prey, was president of the Universal Motors Corporation. Detroit's biggest automobile combine. The other was Ascott Keane, criminologist.

Keane got up from his chair and paced slowly back and forth across the room, his wide-shouldered, athletic body moving with the perfect muscular co-ordination of a trained athlete. His gray eyes were like chips of ice in his lean face. His black brows were drawn low.

"There is only one person on earth who could possibly be responsible for this," he said.

Corey, president of Universal, stared up at him. His veiled eyes looked more than ever like the eyes of a bird of prey—but of a very frightened bird, now. But even in his fright, he preserved his business caution. So many men, these days, claimed knowledge to which they had no right—and tried to extort money from you on that claim!

"Who is that?" he asked, warily.

"Doctor Satan," said Keane.

Corey sighed and leaned back in his chair. "You are right. I guess you know the answer behind the—the disappearances, as you claim to do. The voice that spoke to me ended by insisting that its owner was somebody with the bizarre name, Doctor Satan."

Keane stared at the man. On Keane's face was a trace of impatience. He had read the man's thoughts, and didn't like them. But Corey, wealthy and powerful as he was, was only a pawn in this game. And one doesn't become annoyed with pawns. "Tell me about the voice," he said.

Corey swallowed with difficulty. His face went greenish. "I was in my office. The office is sound-proofed, so that no voice could have come from outside. I was alone—even my secretary had been sent out—and the door was locked. I sit alone like that often when I want to think out a problem. And while I was sitting there—a voice came to my ears.

"'You have heard the news,' the voice said. 'You have heard how Charles Besson, and Thomas Dryer, son of Dryer the motor magnate, were consumed in a mysterious violet flame.'"

Corey looked at Keane like a terrified child. "It was almost like the voice of a second self speaking! It came so unobtrusively and—and naturally—that for a minute I wasn't startled at all. But then—I was. I realized that there wasn't a soul but myself in that locked, sound-proof room. A voice—save mine—*couldn't* sound in there! But this one did; a soft, almost gentle voice, but it gave me chills. It went on:

"'You are thinking of that news now. You are planning how best to take advantage, in a business way, of the fact that Besson has died suddenly, and that Dryer is stunned and helpless from the blow of his son's death.

"That—that was true," Corey blurted out. "It was as if someone was reading my mind . . ."

"Someone was," Keane murmured. "Go on."

"Well, I *was* thinking about the business advantages that might accrue to Universal by the tragedies. Any man would. Corey shivered. "The voice said:

"'You have more important things to think about now. One is—your own life. Another is, how you can arrange your financial affairs so that you can take ten million dollars in cash from your fortune. For that is the price of your life. Ten million dollars. You will deliver it to my ser-

vant within the next few days, or you will die as Besson and Dryer died. I swear that, and Doctor Satan has never broken a vow."

Corey gnawed at the back of his bony, prehensile hand. "Those aren't the exact words, but that's the message given by the voice. And that was the name: Doctor Satan. I'd have said the whole thing was some clever trick, played by a master at hypnotism or ventriloquism to cheat me out of money. I'd have defied the orders of the voice, of course—if it hadn't been for the awful way in which Besson and Dryer's son died. My God, can anyone really do that—consume people in violet flame—at will?"

Keane shrugged. "According to the newspaper and many witnesses, someone can. What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know. That's what I came here to ask. I had about decided to pay, when you phoned. How did you happen to get in touch with me, anyway, at such a crucial moment?" A bit of the old wariness and business suspicion came back to Corey's face.

Keane smiled. "The moment I read, in New York, of the inexplicable tragedies that had happened here, I flew to Detroit. Both victims had been prominent in motor manufacturing circles, so I looked for the next one. Your name is first on the list of prominence here, so I began with you, intending to run down the list of executives till I found one who had been threatened. I knew who was behind the crimes, and I know something of how he works, so my course of action was outlined for me. You told me you had been threatened; I asked you to see me—and that's the answer."

Corey sighed. "Shall I pay this Doctor Satan? Ten million dollars! It's colossal! But life is more important than money . . ."

"Even if the price asked was only ten cents," snapped Keane, "you shouldn't pay it."

"But he'll kill me! The flame . . ."

Keane's long jaw squared. His firm mouth became firmer, grimmer. "I've fought this man more than once," he said. "I've beaten him before. I'll do it again. Don't pay. Your life will be saved—if you take one precaution."

"And that?" said Corey eagerly.

"Don't ride in a car. In fact, don't ride in anything capable of high speed: bus, train, anything." He glanced toward the door, indicating that the interview was over. "If you refrain from that, you'll be all right."

Corey went out. The door opened after his exit, and Keane's secretary came into the room. Tall, lithe, beautiful, with dark blue eyes and hair

more red than brown, she stared at her employer with a look in her eyes that would have revealed much to him had he been gazing at her at the moment instead of looking unseeingly out the window at the roof-tops of the automobile city.

Beatrice sighed and came up to him.

"You have found out how the deaths were caused?" she asked, professionally, with the glow hidden in her eyes.

Keane nodded absently. "I have found out several things. Not exactly, in detail, but closely enough to map out my plans.

"Doctor Satan is up to his old methods of harnessing the forces of nature to do his crimes for him. It was nature that killed Besson and Dryer's son. Static electricity.

"Both Besson and young Dryer were notoriously fast drivers. Very well, Doctor Satan contrived a method of generating and storing static electricity in enormous amounts. Probably the generating was done by the wheels themselves, turning at fast speeds. The electricity was stored in some small device that wouldn't be noticed if examination was made of the car before it was taken out. When a voltage was built up that would be far beyond any amount that could be registered on any recording instruments yet devised, it exploded the storage device—and utterly consumed car and occupants and everything else. That is the only thing that would explain the violet light told of by the witnesses. In a way, a natural death. But a gruesome, fearful, spectacular death—which would so horrify and cow other motor manufacturers that they would give Doctor Satan anything he asked rather than risk the same fate themselves."

"Horrifying and fearful enough," breathed Beatrice with a shiver. "Ascott—you have escaped the other deaths this fiend has invented. Can you escape this? For of course he'll turn the new weapon on you, too. More than anything else on earth, he wants to get rid of you. He'll try to kill you as soon as he learns you are here."

Keane laughed a little, without humor. "As soon as he knows I'm here? My dear, you underestimate him. As surely as we live and breathe—he knows that now!"

At twenty minutes past noon a man in the dungarees of the Union Airlines mechanics turned off a sidewalk into the yard of a factory. It was a small factory, two stories high, less than an eighth of a block square. Its windows were boarded up. The yard was grown with weeds.

A man sat in the open doorway of the deserted-looking building. He was an elderly man, poorly dressed. His faded blue eyes stared straight

ahead with curious blankness. His face was stubbled with three days' growth of grayish beard.

The man in dungarees came up to the doorway. A small, monkey-like fellow with a mat of hair over his face through which peered small, cruel eyes, he hopped as he walked in an oddly animal way.

"Is anyone in?" he asked the watchman.

The watchman's faded blue eyes did not move. They continued to look straight ahead as he sat there like a statue. "Yes, sir," he said.

"How many?" asked the man in dungarees.

"Two, sir."

The watchman's lips moved like mechanical things. He looked and acted like something actuated with springs and wires.

The little man, in dungarees shivered a bit. His pale eyes narrowed with an emotion that might have been fear. He walked past the watchman, who did not move a muscle, and into the factory building.

It was dark in here in spite of the noon daylight outside. The reason was that the entire inside of the first floor was draped closely in heavy black fabric, which also stretched from a frame crossing in front of the door, so that the door could be open innocently and yet outside eyes could no see in and detect the black drapes.

The little man passed under the door drape. He entered the dark interior, which was dimly lit by red electric bulbs so that it resembled a corner of some weird inferno.

Over a bench on which was a glistening small receptacle about a third the size of a cigar-box, a figure bent which was like something seen in a fanciful illustration of hell: a tall, gaunt figure draped from head to heels in a red robe, with red gloves shielding the hands, and a red mask of the figure, red had been draped: a skull-cap, from which protruded two Luciferian horns in imitation of the horns of the Devil.

Next to this eerie figure was the body of a legless man—gigantic torso supported by calloused, powerful hands.

"Girse," said the imperious, red-draped figure, without turning its head.

The little man in dungarees drew a quick breath. The red figure had its back toward him. It could not have heard his soft entrance. Yet, as though it had been facing him, that entry had been noted.

"Yes, Doctor Satan," he said.

"Report, please."

Girse hopped closer in his monkey-like fashion, and stood next to Bostiff, the legless giant. From under the voluminous dungarees he drew a flat leather case.



"Miller, the truck manufacturer, did as you ordered," he said docilely to Doctor Satan. "Here are thirty checks, of one hundred thousand dollars apiece."

Doctor Satan's coal-black eyes glowed from the eyeholes of the red mask. In them was glacial triumph.

"It is well. You got into the Union Airlines hangar?"

"I did," said Girse, his pale eyes glinting.

"You attached the storage cube?"

"I did, with the wire leading to the propeller, and with fins attached to the propeller blades."

Unholy satisfaction glittered in the coal-black eyes. Then it was dimmed, and the light of rage glowed there.

"It will be as we wish it— unless Keane discovers it in time."

"Keane— is here?" quavered Girse.

Bostiff spat out an oath, his dull eyes red with fury.

"He is here," replied Doctor Satan. "I gleaned that from the mind of Corey. He is here, in Detroit. And Corey has seen him and was advised not to meet my demands. That was foreseen— which is why you attached the storage cube to the propeller. He is in a tower suite at the Book Hotel, with his secretary Beatrice Dale. And he is daring to match his wits against mine once more."

Icy murder flared in the coal-black eyes. The red-gloved hands closed slowly, quiveringly.

"This time, Ascott Keane dies! This time I will get rid of the one obstacle between me and unlimited power, through fear, over the minds of men."

He turned back to the bench, with his red-gloved fingers delicately adjusting tiny, fine plates of some substance like mica which packed the interior of the small metal container on which he was working— a container like that which had been attached to the sedan of Besson and the roadster of young Tom Dryer.

"With Keane out of the way," he said, "I could be supreme on earth— and I will be!"

#### *4. The Voice of Satan*

THE LATE EVENING PAPERS gave the news of Doctor Satan's latest blow against the ancient law: Thou shalt not kill. Beatrice Dale brought the paper in to Keane, who was about to go out, and handed it to him without a word.

*This afternoon at four o'clock Mr. H. C. Corey, president of Universal Motors, was killed in an airplane accident twenty miles out from the Detroit landing-field.*

*Mr. Corey, called on urgent business to New York City, chartered the plane for himself alone and took off at three-forty. The plane circled the field once, then headed east. Twenty miles from the field it exploded.*

*Union Airline officials have no explanation to make. The explosion, according to eye-witnesses, was accompanied by a violet flame, which is not the type of flame resulting from gasoline explosions . . .*

Keane read the account, then crumpled the paper in a grim hand. "Corey dies in unique plane accident," the item was headed. And across half the front page was spread the account:

Keane drew a deep breath. "'Called on urgent business to New York City,'" he quoted. "The fool! He committed suicide. Doctor Satan gave that call, of course. And Corey, fearing financial loss, disobeyed my orders. I told him not to ride in anything capable of speed."

He went toward the door. "I'm going to Besson's home," he said to Beatrice. "I want a talk with Besson's chauffeur about the sedan the man was killed in. I'll be back in an hour."

Carlisle, Besson's chauffeur, bit his lips as he faced Keane in the cool dimness of the great garage.

"I suppose I should have gone to the police about it," he said unsteadily. "But I couldn't see what good that would do them, and I knew I'd get in a lot of trouble over it."

"Tell me more exactly what happened," Keane urged.

"Well, at a little before seven o'clock, I was in here washing down the town car. Mr. Besson came out and asked if the sedan was ready. I said yes, and he got into it . . ."

"You're sure it was Besson?"

"No, later I realized I couldn't be sure," Carlisle admitted. "I heard his voice, and I'll swear it *was* his voice. And I saw his back, and he was wearing a checked suit as he usually does. But I'll have to confess I didn't see his face."

"Girse," murmured Keane. "Made up as Besson — with Satan himself speaking in Besson's voice from a distance . . ."

"What?" said Carlisle.

"Nothing. Go on."

"That's about all. The man I thought was Mr. Besson went out, with a bag and everything as if on the Cleveland trip, and then came back in about half an hour. I didn't see him return—I only heard the car drive in and went down and found the sedan. The first I knew something was wrong was when Besson called, half an hour later, asking if the sedan was ready for his trip! I thought he'd gone crazy, then."

"You have no idea where the sedan was driven in that half-hour?" said Keane.

"None at all," said Carlisle. "And now, of course, no one will ever know. Because there isn't any sedan to look over any more."

Keane's lips compressed. "There's no sedan, but I think we can find out where it went in that fatal half-hour. Have you cleaned out in here recently?"

Carlisle looked at the floor of the garage and shook his head. "We haven't kept up quite the schedule we usually do since the boss—died. The garage floor hasn't been swept . . ."

"Good," said Keane. "Where did the sedan stand in here?"

Carlisle indicated the space nearest the end wall. Keane went there, bending low, critically examining the concrete. "The man drove it back into this spot before Besson took it out?"

Carlisle nodded. Keane got to his knees. There were slight flakes of dust and dirt from a car's tires on the floor. Keane took up some of these and put them carefully in an envelope. He turned to go.

"Shall I tell the cops about this?" said Carlisle, white-faced.

Keane shook his head. "It would get you in a lot of trouble, as you said. And I don't think it would do any good. You can't be blamed for being fooled by the man who killed your employer."

He went out, with the chauffeur's thankful and admiring gaze following him.

At the curb before the Besson home was the coupe Keane had hired to get about the city in. He got in behind the wheel and headed for the near-down-town section.

He was on his way to the laboratory of a friend of his. In New York he had his own laboratory, vastly better than the one owned by his friend; but he hadn't time to send to New York and he thought the friend's equipment would be sufficient enough to perform the task he wanted.

As a man will do sometimes, Keane broke his own strict rule—dis-

regarded the very warning he had given Corey: not to ride in anything capable of speed.

In a hurry to get the scrapings of the sedan's tires analyzed, he drove like a black comet along the boulevards; drove that way till suddenly his hair began to feel as though it were standing on end and every nerve in his body tingled and rasped with exasperating sensitivity.

His face paled a little then. With his lips drawn back to show his set teeth, he jammed down the brakes of the car.

"Static electricity!" he whispered to himself. "The devil! Does he think he can get *me* that way?"

He opened the hood of the car. Attached to the underside of the dash was a metal container. From it led a fine wire. The wire went to the fan whirling at the front of the motor. And to the fan-blades fine fins of some flexible, colorless stuff had been attached.

With a savage jerk, Keane ripped the wire loose from the metal box. But the box itself he detached carefully to take home for further study. He knew that the secret of the violet explosions lay in that box; a secret consisting in what possible manner of substance could act as a storage battery for static electricity and store the stuff till an explosion point was reached.

With Doctor Satan frustrated and his life no longer in danger, Keane went on to his friend's laboratory and presented the tire scrapings for analysis.

"Mixed in with the normal dirt of the streets," the friend reported a little later, "there are two substances which might tell you where the car has been. One is a trace of cinders, such as is to be found in many factory yards. The other is a powdered chemical which turns out to be a special kind of lime fertilizer."

"So?" said Keane.

"So this," replied the man. "There is only one plant in Detroit which manufactures that particular type of lime fertilizer. That is a plant out on Jefferson Avenue." He gave the address. "It is at least possible that Besson's sedan was driven near the plant during its half-hour absence and picked up a little of the fertilizer, spilled on the street from trucking."

"And the trace of cinders?"

The man shrugged.

"That particular company does not have cinder surfaces in its yards. I telephoned to find out. They must have come from somewhere else."

Keane thanked him and went out. His light gray eyes were glittering, his firm mouth was a bleak slit in his face. Cinders, and dust of a ferti-

lizer made only in one spot in the city! He thought that should provide a trail to the spot in Detroit where Doctor Satan lurked like a human spider spinning new and ever more ghastly webs.

He went to the Book Hotel, to study the shining metal container he'd got from his dash, and try to penetrate its secret, before making the next and last move that should bring him face-to-face with Doctor Satan himself.

At the hotel desk he told the clerk to ring Miss Dale's room and ask her to come to his suite with notebook and pencil. His phone was ringing when he opened his door.

"Miss Dale is not in her room, sir," the clerk reported.

Keane's eyebrows went up. Then they drew down into heavy, straight black lines over his light gray eyes as apprehension began to gnaw at his brain.

He went to the room in the tower suite which he had set aside to use as office and workroom. "Beatrice," he called, looking around for the quietly beautiful girl who was more right hand to him than mere secretary.

The room was empty. So were the other rooms. With the apprehension mounting to chill certainty in his mind, Keane looked around. He found his hands clenching and sweat standing out on them as his quick imagination grasped the significance of her absence.

An exclamation burst from his lips. Half under the desk in his temporary office he saw a glove. It was a tan glove of the type he had seen Beatrice wear last. Just the one glove.

Near the door, now, he saw the other . . .

"My God!" he whispered.

Beatrice had gone out of the hotel. That was a certainty. But—she never went out ungloved. It was one of her fastidious habits. Yet there were the gloves she wore with the brown street costume she'd had on when Keane left her . . .

His head bent swiftly, and a terrible fear leaped into his eyes. A voice had sounded.

"Ascott Keane," it said—and it was hard to tell whether it was an actual voice or a thought making itself articulate in his own brain. "You escaped the death waiting for you under the hood of your coupe. You shall face death later at my hands, in spite of that. But before death comes for you, you shall have the pleasure of imagining, as you are doubtless doing now, the lingering fate that shall be dealt out to your

able assistant, Beatrice Dale. I have her, Keane. And when you next see her, if you ever do, I'm afraid you'll be unable to recognize her."

There was a low, icy laugh, and the voice ceased.

"My God!" breathed Keane again.

And then he was racing from the room, with agony in his heart but keeping the agony carefully walled off from the cold and rapid efficiency with which his keen mind could work in times of great emergency.

"There is only one plant in Detroit which manufactures that particular type of lime fertilizer," his laboratory friend had said. "That is a plant out on Jefferson Avenue . . ."

Keane got into the coupe, wrenched the wheel around, and pressed the accelerator to the floorboard as he sped out Jefferson Avenue.

### *5. Living Death*

KEANE WENT STRAIGHT to the plant from near which the tires of Besson's sedan had picked up the significant trace of fertilizer. There he paused a moment outside the high wire fence enclosing the company's grounds. But he hesitated only a moment. There were no cinders in that yard, as the laboratory man had said. And the sedan had been some place where cinders had paved a space. Also the company grounds were swarming with workmen. No one could drive a car in, tamper with it, and drive away again unnoticed.

He started on away from the plant, and farther away from the center of town. There was only the one direction to go in. The sedan, to have picked up the cinder trace, would have had to go beyond this point.

He drove very slowly, examining intently the properties on each side of the street. But it was only with an effort that he kept himself from driving like mad, senselessly, aimlessly, so long as he covered a lot of ground in a hurry.

Beatrice . . .

Never had he had such urge for speed—but speed did no good when he didn't know where he was going.

Beatrice . . .

"I have her, Keane. And when next you see her, if you ever do, I'm afraid you'll be unable to recognize her."

That was what Doctor Satan had said. Where in God's name was she? And what was Satan planning to do to her?

He bit his lips, and kept the coupe down to a speed at which he could scan the buildings he passed. And then he started a little, and lowered

his head rapidly and drove by the place that had attracted his attention. The place was perfectly innocent-looking. It was a small factory less than fifty yards from the sidewalk on the left-hand side. But two things had riveted his attention.

The first was that the grounds around the factory were cinder-paved. The second was that the place was abandoned, with boarded-up windows and an air of desolation.

An abandoned factory, in a not-too-populous part of the city . . .

Keane got out of the coupe and walked back a half-block. He saw that an elderly man, patently a watchman, sat in the open side-doorway of the factory.

He hesitated an instant, then walked openly toward the man. He couldn't have hidden his approach anyhow, and thought he could overpower the watchman if his suspicions of the place were verified and the man tried to give an alarm to others inside.

His eyes fastened to the watchman with increasing curiosity as he approached. He saw that the man was cheaply dressed, with faded blue eyes and a stubble of grayish beard on his face. And he saw that the eyes stared off and away in the oddest, most unseeing way imaginable. Also he noticed how unmoving the old man was. He sat in the doorway like a statue, not shifting his position in any way. Even when Keane had come quite close, he did not move.

Keane stared down at him with growing grimness. He could see the man's pulse beat in the vein in his throat; but it seemed to him that the pulse-beat was incredibly slow. He could see the hair of his stubble of beard closer; and it appeared that the flesh of the man's face had receded from hair-roots, more than that the hair itself had grown.

Keane felt a chill touch his spine. Realization, like a spike of ice, began to sink into his brain. But he still could not quite believe.

"Hello," he said to the man, in a low voice.

"Hello," the man replied.

He said the word with his lips hardly moving, and with his eyes staring blindly straight ahead.

Keeping his voice almost in a whisper, so that it could not be heard through the open doorway in which the man sat, he said: "Are you alone here?"

"There are— four inside," the watchman replied, creakily.

Keane moistened his lips.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"It is . . ."

The man stopped, like a run-down machine. His faded, unblinking eyes stared straight ahead.

Keane stopped, then. He touched the watchman's wrist, and shuddered.

Perceptibly he could feel a pulse, beating perhaps twenty to the minute. He could see the man's chest rise and fall with immensely decelerated breathing.

Pulse, and breathing. And the man could speak and, up to a point, answer questions. But that man was dead!

Keane dropped the wrist, icy as something long immersed in water. His lips were a thin line in his face. A dead man on guard! A watchman whose presence here would be missed, and who therefore had been left in his accustomed place so that passers-by would have no suspicion that anything unusual was taking place inside!

He had found Doctor Satan. The presence of a living dead man where a live and vital human being should be, proclaimed the fact like a shout.

Keane drew a long breath. Then he stepped past the dead man, who sat on with faded blue eyes staring into space. He entered the doorway. His eyes, accustoming themselves to the darkness, detected the presence of the black drapes swathing the interior and making of it a smaller room-within-a-room. At the same time his ears caught a soft, gentle voice—a voice that made the hair on his neck crawl with remembrance and primeval fear. The voice of Doctor Satan.

Edging his way along between the drapes and the wall, careful to touch neither, Keane moved to a spot where the soft but imperious voice sounded farthest away. Then he took out a knife, slit the black fabric, and looked through.

The first thing his eyes rested on—was Beatrice Dale.

She sat on the floor of the abandoned factory with her slim arms down by her sides, and her silk-sheathed legs out in front of her. Arms and legs were bound; and a gag was around her lips. Over the gag her eyes stared out, wide and frightened, yet, in the last analysis, composed. Keane felt a hard thrill of admiration for her fortitude go through him as he looked into her eyes.

Over her bent the figure he had seen before several times in the flesh—and many times in nightmares. A tall, gaunt body sheathed in a red robe, with a red mask covering the face and a red skull-cap over the hair.

Keane bit his lips as he noted the knobs, like horns, that protruded from the Luciferian skull-cap. Those mocking small projections were



the keynote of the character motivating Doctor Satan. A man who took pride in his fiendishness! A man who robbed and killed, and broke the laws of man and God, not for gain, because he already had more than any one person could spend, but solely for thrills! A being jaded with the standard pleasures of the world, and turning to monstrous, sadistic acts to justify his existence and give him the sense of power he craved!

Next to the red-robed figure, Keane saw Doctor Satan's two malevolent henchmen, Girse and Bostiff.

Girse, small and monkey-like, was gazing at the girl's form with his pale eyes like cruel beads in the hair covering his face. Bostiff, supporting his giant's torso on his calloused hands, swayed back and forth in a sort of full ecstasy.

Again Doctor Satan's voice came to Keane's ears. "I have not yet decided what I shall do with you," the soft voice pronounced. "You are beautiful. I am alone in the world—and it is not inappropriate that Lucifer take a consort. But that consort should not be a mere living woman such as lesser beings have. You noticed the watchman as you were borne into this place?"

Keane saw a spasm twitch Beatrice's face, saw her eyes wince with terror.

"I see you did," Doctor Satan said. "And I see you sensed his state. A dead man, my dear—yet a man who will breathe and move in a sort of suspended animation as long as I shall will it. A man whose automatic reflexes can still dimly function, so that the dead brain may direct the muscles of throat and lips to answer verbally any questions not too complex, and so that the body may move to orders not too difficult."

Doctor Satan's grating, inhuman laugh sounded out. "It comes to my mind," he said, "that Lucifer might here find a fitting mate. The devil's consort—death. A beautiful woman who must answer as required, and who must move without question to fulfill her master's least demand. That would be unique—and amusing. Think how Ascott Keane would react to that."

Keane, motionless behind the drape, with his eye to the slit in the fabric, felt perspiration trickle down his cheeks. The man was diabolical. He was beyond madmen in the aims he pursued and goals he achieved. Yet he was not mad. That was perhaps the most hideous part of it. He was sane. Icily, brilliantly sane!

And now Doctor Satan went on with that in his voice which made

Keane suddenly tense in every muscle as instinctive small warnings prickled in his brain.

"The reactions of Ascott Keane to that spectacle . . . Very interesting. I must see them. In fact—*I will see them!*"

Like a flash of light the red-robbd body whirled. The coal-black eyes of the man glared through the eyeholes of the red mask—glared straight into the eyes of Keane, pressed to the slit in the black fabric.

Impossible that he should see Keane's eyes in the dim red light of the black-shaded room! Impossible that he should have heard Keane breathe or move! Yet he knew the criminologist was there!

For a moment that seemed an age, Doctor Satan's glittering black eyes stared into Keane's steely gray ones. Then the red mask moved with words. "You will come here, Ascott Keane."

Keane's legs moved. Savagely he fought the muscles of his own body, which were like relentless rebels in the way they disobeyed the dictates of his will. But the muscles won.

His legs moved. And they bore him forward, like an automaton, so that the black drapes moved forward with him, slithered over his head, and sank back into place behind him.

He walked up to where Doctor Satan and Girse and Bostiff ringed the bound, helpless girl. There he stood before the man in red, eyes like steel chips as they glinted with savage but impotent fury.

"Will you never learn, Keane, that my will towers over yours, and my power goes beyond yours?" Doctor Satan crooned.

Keane said nothing. He looked at Beatrice, and saw that into her eyes had crept a horror that went beyond the fright that had entered them at mention of the living dead man who guarded this red-lit inferno.

He could feel his body responding sluggishly to the commands of his brain, now. But the recovery was feeble. He could not have moved toward Doctor Satan to save his life, though with every fiber of him he craved to throw himself on the man and rip the red mask from his face and batter that face into a thing as unhuman in appearance as its owner's soul was in reality.

"Girse," said Doctor Satan.

That was all. The little man hopped in obedience. He came close to Keane with his right hand hidden behind his back.

Keane gasped and tried to throw his arms up as he read in the little man's mind the command Satan had wordlessly given him. But his arms moved too slowly to prevent the next act.

Girse lashed forward with his own arm. Something glittering in his

right hand pressed into Keane's flesh. He felt a sharp sting, then complete physical numbness.

He sank to the floor. But though his body was a dead thing, his mind continued to function with all its normal perception.

Doctor Satan's glacial laugh rang out.

"The great Ascott Keane," he said. "We shall see how he meets his own fate—and that of his efficient secretary, toward whom his secret emotions are not quite as platonic as his conscious mind believes."

He turned to the little man. "Girse," he said again. That was all. The rest of the command was unspoken. But all too clearly, with the telepathic powers that were his, Keane caught that too. He fought in an agony of helplessness to make his body move, as Girse hopped toward Beatrice. But he was as immobile as though paralyzed.

Again Girse held a hypodermic needle, but this was a larger one than the one had plunged into Keane's body.

With his pale eyes shining, the monkey-like little man pressed the needle into Beatrice Dales's bound left arm. The girl closed her eyes. A strangled moan came through the gag that bound her lips. Keane croaked out an oath and struggled again with a body as limp and moveless as a dead thing.

"The drug in that hypodermic is quick-acting," Doctor Satan said. "Observe, Keane."

With starting eyes, Keane saw how true the words were.

Into the girl's eyes already had crept the terrible, unseeing look that characterized the faded eyes of the thing outside in the doorway. He could see the pulse in her throat slow down. Slower . . . slower . . .

"She's dead, Keane," said Doctor Satan emotionlessly. "Though, dead, she will obey better than alive. Girse."

Once more the monkey-like small man approached the girl. In his hand was a knife. He slit the bonds that held her, and removed her gag. "Come to me, Beatrice Dale," commanded Doctor Satan.

Through a red haze, Keane saw the girl get to her feet, slowly, unsteadily. She walked toward the figure in red, moving like one asleep. "You are mine, Beatrice Dale," Doctor Satan said softly.

There was a perceptible hesitation. Was the girl's brain, even in death, struggling against the monstrous statement? Then her lips moved, as the lips of the thing in the doorway had moved, like the lips of a mechanical doll. "I am yours."

Keane panted on the floor. He could not even cry out. His vocal cords were numbed by the drug, as was the rest of his body.

Doctor Satan started down at Keane. "And so, my friend, we see the end. Your aide has become—as you see. You yourself shall presently die as Besson and Dryer and Corey died. The end . . . Bostiff."

The legless giant hitched his way forward on his long arms.

"The flywheel, Bostiff," Doctor Satan said. "Girse, attach the cube of death to Keane."

And now Keane glanced at a thing he had seen only perfunctorily, and noticed not at all, until now: On a length of rusty shafting in the rear of the factory room was a big flywheel, which had performed some power service when the factory was busy. To this was belted an electric motor.

Bostiff hitched his way to the flywheel. As he went, he trailed behind him a fine wire only too familiar to Keane, the kind of wire that had led to the metal box Keane had detached from his coupe before death should strike him. To the spokes of the flywheel, Keane knew, were fastened the colorless, unobtrusive fins which generated the static death that had struck down the motor millionaires.

Girse fastened to Keane's chest a metal cube which had been resting on a low bench near by. Bostiff fastened the other end of the wire leading from it, to a point near the flywheel. Then he started the motor.

The big flywheel started turning over. Doctor Satan's eyes burned down at Keane.

"In five minutes, approximately," he said, "there will be a violet flare. In that flare, you will be consumed. Just before it occurs, the drug that holds you will begin to disappear, so that you shall be the more keenly aware of your fate. We shall, naturally, wait outside till the bursting into flame of the building announces that you are no longer alive to annoy me."

He turned toward the dead girl. "Come, my dear."

Beatrice walked toward the draped door, her body swaying a little from the impairment of her sense of balance, her eyes staring unblinkingly ahead. Doctor Satan followed. Behind came Girse and Bostiff.

Doctor Satan raised the drape. The three passed through ahead of him. He stared at Keane. "Four minutes now," he said. And then he followed the others.

*6. Two Metal Cubes*

KEANE WAS LYING SO THAT he could see the watch at his wrist. He watched the little second hand fly around its circle three times. He listened to the whirling of the great flywheel, gathering static electricity through its fins; such a colossal store of it as even the lightning could not rival—to be held in the mysterious metal cube on his chest till it had gathered beyond the cube's power to contain it any longer. Then the cube would be consumed, and consume everything around it like a tremendous blown fuse . . .

Keane stared at the watch. He had a hundred seconds of life left. One hundred seconds . . .

But his counting of the seconds was not actuated solely by the fear of death. His mind had never been keener, colder than it was now. Ascott Keane was waiting for the first sign of returning movement in his muscles. When that occurred he had a plan to try. It was a plan the success of which hinged on facts unknown to him. But its steps seemed logical.

He felt burning pain in his finger ends, then in his hands. Grimly he moved his fingers, searing with returning life. He flexed his hands. He had forty seconds—perhaps a little longer, perhaps a little less, for Doctor Satan could not foretell to the second when the static force stored in the metal cube should burst its bonds in the terrific violet flare.

Now he could move his right arm feebly from the elbow. He dragged it up by sheer will till it went to his coat pocket. In that coat pocket was a factor—which Doctor Satan had not reckoned with: the metal cube with its broken end of wire, which Keane had taken from his coupe for analysis which he had not had time to make.

He got the cube from his pocket. His watch told him he had twenty seconds, a third of a minute, to live.

With maddening slowness, his hand moved. It found the wire from the box in his pocket. With numbed fingers it pressed the broken bit of wire to the other cube . . .

The fifteen seconds that passed then were an age.

Keane's idea was that with two of the storage cubes hooked together, it would take twice as long for the spinning flywheel to generate the static force that was presently to consume him. As simple as that! And, even though he knew nothing of the substance in the cubes capable of

storing the force, he thought its action must be as logical as it was simple.

If it took minutes longer for the building, with Keane in it, to go up in violet flames, Doctor Satan might come back to see what was wrong . . .

The zero second approached, passed. Keane held his breath. Ten seconds passed, and still death did not strike. The flywheel turned, the gathering static electricity rasped his nerves and stood his hair on end, but the violet flare did not dart toward the heavens.

Twenty seconds went by, and Keane breathed again—and watched the draped door. He could move arms and legs now, and a bath of flaming agony told that all his body would be soon released from the grip of the paralyzing drug.

Two minutes had gone by before he saw the drapes at the door move. And then—Girse came in. Girse! Not his master! But Girse, Keane thought, would do.

The monkey-like little man came into the red-lit room, and to his merited end. Keane's steely eyes were on him. Through them, as through shining little gates, his iron will leaped at the man.

Girse stiffened in the doorway. Then, in obedience to Keane's unspoken command, he walked to Keane's side.

"You came to see why the violet flame has not burst out?" Keane said.

"Yes," said Girse, his wide, helpless eyes riveted on Keane's.

"Doctor Satan is outside with Bostiff and the girl?"

"Yes," said Girse. A spasm passed over his hairy face, as though apprehension struggled with the deep hypnosis in which he was held.

"Answer this," snapped Keane, "and answer it truly. The girl, Beatrice Dale, is now dead. Do you know of a way to make her live again?"

God, the agony that went into Keane's waiting for that answer! And then Girse's lips moved. "Yes."

Keane drew a deep breath. He was standing now, tottering a little, but almost entirely recovered. "What is the method? Tell me quickly—and truly."

"The drug that killed her is its own antidote. More of it will bring back to life any who have been dead for not more than half an hour."

"Thank God!" said Keane.

And then he acted. And as he did so, before his mind ran the list of crimes this man, with Doctor Satan as his leader and the unspeak-

able Bostiff as his comrade had committed. Thelst took all pity from his face.

He fastened the two metal cubes to the man whose body was held in his mental thrall. Then he went to the door, backing toward it with his commanding eyes ever on Girse.

The flywheel turned with a monotonous whirring. The fins attached to its spokes sent down the fine wire the accumulation of current. Millions, billions of volts, filling the mysterious storage capacity of the first cube, reaching toward the capacity of the second.

Keane looked at his watch. In thirty seconds, if Doctor Satan were right, the two cubes should explode with double the violence planned on . . .

There was a violet flare that seemed to fill the world. Keane was knocked backward out of a doorway that an instant later became nonexistent.

A glimpse he had of a man who sprawled over and over with the force of the shock and then relaxed to lie at last in the actual death hitherto denied him. The dead watchman! Then he was staring into coal-black eyes that glinted with a fear that never before had touched their arrogant depths.

"Keane!" whispered Doctor Satan, as the criminologist faced him. "You weren't . . . then it was Girse . . ."

## *NOTICE TO COLLECTORS*

We regret that circumstances have forced us to raise the price of all back issues of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES* to 60c, with a minimum order of two accepted. (If you want just one, we shall have to charge 75c.) As this is being typed, all 13 are available, but since orders come in nearly every day, we cannot promise you that all will remain available long.

We also regret that various newsstands still do not carry SMS, but there is a remedy available to you—subscribe, and save the price of one issue.

---

"It was Girse who died," said Keane— and sprang.

With a pleasure that sent a savage thrill to his finger-tips, he got his hands around the red-swathed throat.

"The drug that made that girl as she is," he grated. "I want it."

Doctor Satan's voice gurgled behind the red mask. His hand went under his robe. The fear of death—that exaggerated fear felt by all killers when they themselves feel death approach—gleamed in his eyes. He drew out the big hypodermic.

"How much is the reviving amount?" grated Keane.

"Two . . . calihtrated marks . . . on the . . . plunger," gasped Doctor Satan as Keane's fingers relaxed. "The same as . . . the lethal dose . . ."

"Death, or renewed life, the same," whispered Keane.

Then a bleak smile shaped his firm lips. He took the hypodermic.

With the swiftness of a leaping serpent his hand moved. And death poured into Doctor Satan's veins!

Keane slowly got up. The coal-black eyes faded. They became dull splotches through the mask's eyeholes.

Keane shot the stated amount into Beatrice's white arm. There was barely enough. With his heart in his throat he watched her reactions.

"Thank God!" he whispered.

Color was slowly seeping into her cheeks. Her eyes blinked, then began to lose that deathly dullness. The pulse increased toward normal in the throat vein.

Keane turned toward Doctor Satan and his face wore the same grim look it had worn when he left Girse to his merited destruction.

"Get up," he said.

Slowly, stiffly, Doctor Satan rose. His dead eyes peered straight ahead.

The factory building was a solid blaze. Shouts and sounds of running feet announced the beginning gathering of a crowd in the street.

"Walk straight ahead— and keep walking," Keane snapped.

The red-clad figure, like a dread automaton, walked straight ahead— toward the roaring flames. Keane waited, with bleak victory in his tired eyes, till the figure was on the brink of the flames. Then he turned to Beatrice.

"What?" she faltered

He helped her up. "Don't talk. Just come with me," he soothed. And, in answer to the look in her eyes: "Doctor Satan? He's dead at last. In the flames. It's triumph for us."

He helped her to the curb and through the milling crowd to his coupe . . .



It was the one of the few major mistakes of Keane's life.

"Two calibrated marks on the plunger," Doctor Satan had said was the reviving dose of the drug. "The same as the lethal dose . . ."

The revival amount had been correct; Beatrice was alive again to prove it. It did not occur to Keane that Satan might have lied about the other.

So he did not see the red-clad figure draw back from the flames as soon as he had turned and started leading the girl from the cinder yard. He did not see Doctor Satan crawl behind a rusted pile of metal tanks, nor see, a moment later a figure clad in conventional dark clothes emerge, leaving behind it a red, Luciferian costume that would have been too conspicuous to wear where many could observe.

"Victory," Keane said again, with shining eyes, as he drove toward the hotel.

But not far from the blazing factory behind him and Beatrice, a tall figure had drawn itself up with clenched fists, and the soft voice quivered with fury as Dr. Satan whispered:

"Ascot Keane thinks he has killed two of us, you, my faithful servant, Girse, and myself. He shall learn his mistake. I shall bring you back, Girse, and together we shall have proper and fitting revenge for the humiliation we have suffered at his hands. This I swear by the Devil, my master!"



## THE PARASITE

*(Continued from page 46)*

He had to return to the Gulch and destroy all the evil that was there, before any could escape, and attend to the regrowth of Ted Parks.

Hermie picked up the hand and tossed it into the trunk as the lieutenant drove up. He laughed loudly, hysterically.

Lewis peered at him. "What is it Hermie?"

"Come on, Lieutenant, we haven't a moment to lose. We've got to burn up Ted Parks' garden! I'll tell you all about it later, but hurry now!"

The lieutenant followed him up the Gulch while Hermie ran around personally burning each plant. The air was permeated with the odor of burning garbage and later—much later—Hermie, with Bruno standing by, proved his point with Ted Parks' hand.

## Coming Next Issue

Peter Strong filled his glass. "Something is responsible, of course, and that something is pulsations of magnetism from individual prime units of matter."

"And the prime units," queried Norton, "what created them?"

"They were never created."

"Being the 'causeless cause' of some of the metaphysicians," I murmured.

"But," argued Norton, ignoring my interjection, "why can't the uncreated be God?"

"The very idea of God is unscientific."

"And yet you believe in a future life?"

"Not in a future life," corrected Peter Strong, "but in the continuity of life. And I don't believe; I know."

"But," I exclaimed, "that is the stock statement of all the mystics and religionists; they all claim to know."

"Yes," he admitted with a smile. "But they claim to know through faith, while I know through knowledge. Not through the knowledge of ancient mystical lore, but through knowledge of more recent discoveries in science. And," he added softly, "through a channel more intimate . . . more dear."

We sipped our beverage in silence. A shadow loomed in the kitchen doorway, the silent figure of the servant. "Consider this," said Peter Strong after awhile. "I have already told you that all life and mass owes its existence to pulsations of magnetism. Science calls this pulsation chemical affinity. But here is a copy of my theory; I typed it to read at the luncheon today." He passed Norton a piece of paper. We read it with care.

"So you see," said Peter Strong, "that Earth life is of one electronic density and spirit life of another. When a man dies, he is just as alive as he ever was, only his ego has a body invisible to us. But if a number of people physically *en rapport* form a circle, or if a vital medium goes in to a trance, sufficient prime units of electricity may be generated for the spirits to build bodies dense enough to be seen. Those bodies will be no denser than the amount of prime units allows them to be. That explains why most spirit bodies and photographs of them are vaporous, unformed . . . It is my aim, through the machine, to put spiritualism on a scientific basis."

*The tale of a strange and weird experiment is told in*

### BY HANDS OF THE DEAD

by Francis Flagg

# the cauldron

A number of readers have written in to correct our erroneous statement that the entire contents of the Arkham House collection of stories by H. P. LOVECRAFT, *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, can be found in the two Lancer softcover collections drawn therefrom. No, no, was the protest; *The Outsider* and *The Shadow over Innsmouth* were not reprinted by Lancer--please fill in the gap for us. Well, the latter story is too long to run complete, but *The Outsider* gives us no difficulty at all.

Back in the days that I attended literature courses in high school, the general attitude on the part of teachers was that a weird or horror or mystery story was a story of revelation, and everything depended upon one's not seeing through the to revelation that would come at the end. Being considerably below the genius level, *The Outsider* worked perfectly as revelation for me the first time. Some years later, while attending a small community college, I encountered my first experience with professorial sneers at HPL, as a literary expert there pointed out how obvious the so-called surprise ending was to anyone above the imbecile level--or at least anyone who had done any reading and was over the age of ten; she allowed that younger ones might be properly astonished and frightened.

Today, re-reading the story, I wonder whether HPL intended *The Outsider* as a story of revelation, or (as Fritz Leiber showed in an essay relating to HPL's characteristics) a story of *confirmation*. There is a considerable difference; in the latter, the reader is expected to suspect the horrible truth reasonably early in the story--so what in the other type of story would be inept telegraphing is entirely deliberate. The suspense and horror is a steady tightening of the screw, as evidence piles up and all hope of any other explanation than the frightful one is gradually dispelled. (The fact that one knows the pendulum is there, one can actually see it coming closer and closer, sweeping wider and wider does not decrease the horror; and, to carry the illustration through, in this type of story there is no sudden and unexpected release.) So, although in both types of tale, the last sentence may be in italics, the purpose of these italics is different; for in the story of confirmation the reader is expected to know--if the reader is surprised the first time, that's all to the good, perhaps. (I do think, though, the story of confirmation would be more effective without the italicized final sentence--if the end is effective, it can be more effective in ordinary type; and, actually some of HPL's better tales do end without

the italics. The more quiet final sentence of *The Thing on the Doorstep* is more, rather than less, chilling than the italicized final sentence of *Pickman's Model*.)

Over the years, despite much controversy, *The Outsider* has held its place at or near the top in popularity among HPL's short stories; and old-timers will recall that this was the title of the first Arkham House book, published in 1939.

John Stanley writes from Pacifica, California: "One aspect of your magazines which hasn't been discussed much by readers are the book reviews. I consider this a far more important department than the space you give it, although I realize you yourself are always fighting a space shortage problem and I am sure would like to devote more space to book reviews. I think you should put this suggestion to the readers (as you have so conscientiously done with other matters in the past) and, if there is any kind of favorable reaction to it, consider devoting space to a few more reviews per issue. Please, don't stop reviewing the Arkham House books, as these are the cream of the crop for us fans. You should, however, remain selective with your reviews, since the other science fiction and fantasy magazines have a tendency to review to death the more obvious new publications. For example, I'd like to know what ever happened to Robert Bloch's new hard cover, *Dragons and Nightmares*, which I cannot find anywhere."

The problem of space is always with me, so that there is no telling

when (or, sometimes in which title) a review I write for the issue currently prepared for the printer is going to appear. In addition, there are two other matters: (a) I review only books of which a copy for review has been supplied to me by the publisher, and thus far only Arkham House has remembered us consistently (b) I review only books which seem to fit in to the general tone of the magazine. Thus science fiction is mostly out; the exceptions are where I consider a particular science fiction novel or collection within the horror or mystery orbit. And, of course, for *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, such specialities as publications by Baker Street Irregulars, Praed Street Irregulars, etc., are going to be of interest to a reasonable fraction of our readers, so they get noticed here if I receive them. Straight crime material is not considered, of course.

Since I first typed up the reply to your letter, I have received a copy of Robert Bloch's book, *Dragons and Nightmares*, from Mirage Press.

Lt. (Ret.) Herman R. Jacks, who misses the illustrations (as none appeared in the Spring issue), goes on to say: "I wonder, are most of your readers old timers, like myself, who are regaining the 'sense of wonder' of their youth, or are they youngsters discovering these thrills and horizons initially?"

"I find the departments equally as enjoyable as the stories. The book reviews have revealed to me books that I might otherwise have missed, ie *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*—a real gem, even at \$25.00."

I, too, miss the illustrations, and hope we will be able to find a way to start presenting them again. At this is being typed, I just don't know the answer yet.

Since I hear from readers of all ages, I'd say that the answer to your question is "both—and in between as well". And I have no idea as to whether the oldtimers or the newcomers are in the majority.

J. Gregory, who considers recent issues of MOH off-feed, says: "You have been doing much better with SMS. The eleventh number had an excellent chiller by Beverly Haaf, a nice one in the first person by Philip Hazleton, and an interesting tale from *ALL STORY* by Phillip Fisher. The Spring (twelfth) issue contains, I believe, the best tale that you have run in perhaps two years in either magazine: Stephen King's *The Reaper's Image*. What marvellous style he has! An excellent storyteller, capable of creating spellbinding mood and fervor. Please, more. More. Surprisingly, I was taken with Leroux idea, and he brought it off successfully."

A few of you, the readers, did not care too much for the Leroux story, on the grounds that it wastoo similar to the legend that Washington Irving retold in *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, which we ran in the 8th (April 1965) issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*. But most of you agreed that Leroux's treatment was sufficiently different; and while this story is not in first place as I type these remarks, it is close—and has had a longer hold on first place than any other story in the issue. Each of the five

stories has been out in front at least once.

Charles Hidley writes from Harrisburg, Penna.: "This wild game of Russian Roulette you play each issue in attempting to match an old Finlay illustration to the contents of a present publication really paid off in a fusillade with #12. That terror-stricken bloke could be a protagonist in each and every of the yarns this time—a blinded New Yorker or a frightened desert priest, a besotted plantation owner, or an attic dweller, or a guillotine witness. It also could be me, realizing that I had neglected to sign that effusive—albeit sincere—outburst applauding *Settler's Wall*.

"I would like to point out that your regard for the 'reserved praise' from those readers you allowed voice seems to me to be misplaced. Surely there is no restraint in the observation that your story was a 'pastiche', as D'Orsogna suggests; nor that it had the tone of 'an editorial lecture'!—Ashley, this time—nor that it was riddled with obvious references—Owings. Even the plaint that *The Long Wall* is a better title is specious, for surely *Settler's Wall* conveys more of an enigma, an archaic remoteness, and a geographic and spatial removedness from the here and now. This, and *Lillies*, have been two 'nova' tales in all the issues of your house.

The first Witch's Tale that I shuddered to in the dawn of time was Alonzo Dean Cole's revamp of this Gaston Leroux story—and to hear that head hit the floor after the velvet band was touched was an experience,

something that TV has never been able to duplicate. I'd appreciate one of your comprehensive editorials on this old radio series. I've noticed that one of the leading actors from this Chicago repertory of the early '30s does an American telephonecommercial on TV—his voice only, of course.

"And you were correct: *Tiger* was a pleasant surprise from Morgan. Did he do any other non brain-transplant writing?

"Just can't dig your hang-up for Simon Ark—he's neither startling nor mysterious. The 'Darkness' a second time around was rather much, and what a God-awful Katzenjammer dialectician bit! I'm becoming convinced that you have a sort of Weber and Fields fetish for this stuff as this is

the fourth I can think of in recent months.

"No illustrations is a drag. The editorial was super and I'm almost inclined to agree that, when they're this good, they should be rated in amongst the stories. But no. Why not consider them lagniappe for, truly, that's what they are."

I suppose it would be more diplomatic to protest (at least urbanely) when a reader finds fault with everyone who found fault with one of my own stories—but such hypocrisy I spurn, especially when no one has offered to pay me handsomely for same. So whether you be right or whether you be wrong, Friend Hidley, my thoughts in your direction are entirely loving.

George put on his spectacles and began to read the short passage: *Among the gifts is a lovely painting of the authorship of one Jacob Pitt. It is a scene of the sunrise over the ocean. Simple and tasteful. I shall hang it in John's room.*

George looked up at the painting on the wall. Its sun was not at sunrise, but was beginning to set at the other side of the picture . . .

"That is the only ocean scene in the house; it is the only painting by Jacob Pitt."

He took the painting down from the wall and handed it to George, who accepted it reluctantly.

"Look here!" John pointed to a black spot of ink on the yellow sun. One month ago I put this spot of ink just to the left of the sun and forgot about it until today. Now the sun has moved over and covered the ink."

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But it is a relief that you found something wrong with the magazine.

Sadly, I just don't have the data to do an editorial on The Witch's Tale. (And an editorial should really be accompanied by a little record of the opening music, Old Nancy's cackle of "hunnerd an' thirteen" or whatever it was "I be tonight, Satan, a hunnerd an' thirteen!" and Satan's sinister meow in reply). I remember a few of them vividly, particular the two-part version of Balzac's *Magic Skin*. But I'm diffident about relying on memory after so many years; what I do is write on subjects where I have references handy.

Yes, there is at least one more good story by Morgan, that has not been reprinted around, and is not a brain-transplant thing. You may see it here later, or perhaps in MOH—it happens to be the sort of tale which could go in either publication.

Weber and Fields, eh? I recall hearing them once or twice, but it iss der grafy tick Cherman oxzzent that I do still find amusing, though that is not by any means the reason why some of these stories were picked in the first place.

The trouble is . . . suppose I did put the editorial on the rating coupon, then managed to turn out a series of especially poor ones? Never know, you know. No, your second thought is better: let 'em be lagnappe.

We haven't heard the last of Preston; however, his next move is not just another round of darkness: it's *The Storm that Had to be Stopped*, and quite vivid. But there are other stories to get to first, so we'll give you a chance to recover.

C. J. Probert writes from Toronto: "On SMS #12: The Finlay cover was one of the two or three best you've ever used for SMS. The only ones comparable to it, in my opinion, were the ones for #s 4, 5, and 10.

"Have just read Leroux's *The Inn of Terror* from your third issue, as well as *The Woman with the Velvet Collar*, and found the latter much more enjoyable. Would be interested to see some more by this author.

"*The Reaper's Image* was similar, in some respects, to *The Glass Floor*, but different enough to make it interesting. Besides, King has a way with imagery ('a bald head that shone like a varnished volleyball').

"*Sirrush* was so much better than *Acrophobia* that it isn't funny (to make use of a cliché).

"Have read only two Simon Ark tales (this one, and *The Man from Nowhere*) and, as with Leroux, the one in #12 was by far the better of the two.

"Am not mightily impressed with

Bassett Morgan, and found *Tiger* rather imitative of a number of other things I have seen. *Si Urag of the Tail* was much better.

"*The City of the Blind* was a marked improvement on *The Darkness on Fifth Avenue*—in the former, the plotting was well-handled, as is usual with Leinster, but the lack of imagination in choice of words distracted me constantly from full appreciation of the story. In *The City of the Blind*, there are only occasional moments of aggravation, as on pages 103/5 when Schaaf was something 'placidly' about five times. It would have been so easy to substitute some other word once in a while. But I commence to get picky . . .

" . . . I did the inexplicable and bought J. Ramsey Campbell's *The Inhabitant of the Lake*. Fully concur with you that he is a worthy successor to Lovecraft. I seem to recollect that one of your readers wrote to complain that Arkham House is currently publishing a lot of second-rate crap. He should read *The Inhabitant*.



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It could become a classic. Think other readers would like him too."

You inquire in your letter about *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*, saying that you have not received the 9th issue. If you still have not, Friend Probert, please let me know--and be sure you put your full address in your letter. The envelope was lost, and you didn't have enough of an address in the letter itself for me to send you another copy, just in case. (I mention this, because you are not by any means the only one; I'm constantly frustrated by omissions of this sort.)

Eugene D. O'Orsogna writes from Stony Brook: "SMS #12 neither surprised nor disappointed me. In fact, it made little impression on me, with two exceptions.

Gaston Leroux's *The Woman with the Velvet Collar* seems more than vaguely similar to Washington Irving's *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, which appeared in *MOH* several years back. The execution of the motif was different, of course, but the similarity does disturb me. Add to this the fact that the writer-reader identification was weakened by the ploy of having a character relate a story within a story, and you have a pretty shoddy tale.

"*The Darkness on Fifth Avenue* was an original and exciting story. *The City of the Blind*, on the other hand, was a run-of-the-mill tale, not expanding on its predecessor, but stretching it. The horribly stereotyped characters--weak in the first story--stood out stronger against this, a

weaker background. I imagine this story will finish first in *The Reckoning* and will probably result in the publishing of the third 'darkness' story. If this is true, I hope it is superior to the *City of the Blind*.

"*Sword for a Sinner* is the most cleverly-plotted story you have yet printed in SMS--not to mention it being the finest Simon Ark you have reprinted. I find, however, that it shows up some of the older stories in your magazine. Where they often tend to bump, this story glides.

"*The Reaper's Image* gave me a genuine fright. It hits one of my personal childhood fears on the head--fear of seeing things in mirrors. Maybe, in this way, I'm over-rating the story, but I think not. The idea of seeing something in a mirror, then disappearing, horrifies me."

So, as you can seem from this selection, readers, there was a very wide spread of opinion on our 12th issue; the story one reader thought fine, another thought poor--not in itself unusual, we find that all the time, but there was a more consistent balancing out in your votes than ever before. As this is being typed, there's a three-way tie for second place!

It's possible, of course, that Leroux read the Irving story; but since Irving derived it from legend, Leroux may have obtained it from an earlier source, as well. I could well be mistaken, but I have a feeling that while the specific form of the legend that Irving used related to a woman who was guillotined, and therefore could not be earlier than the end of the 18th century, it goes back much farther than that, the original victim having been beheaded in an older-fashioned manner. RAWL.

# The Editor's Page

(continued from page 7)

cussed, Vance had expressed a desire to accompany the district attorney on one of his investigations, and that Markham had promised to take him on his next important case. Vance's interest in the psychology of human behavior had prompted the desire, and his friendship with Markham, which had been of long standing, had made the request possible."

A most amazing person is this Philo Vance. While he does not sing like Caruso, both tenor and bass, nor play on the Spanish guitar, his inventory of talents is formidable.

Like Dupin, he is fascinated by psychology; unlike Poe's detective, we find he has made a study of criminal psychology--it is his studies into famous cases in the German annals which become crucial in *The Greene Murder Case*.

He has a passion for art "(if a purely intellectual enthusiasm may be called a passion) . . . not art in its narrow, personal aspects, but in its broader, more universal significance. And art was not only his

dominating interest but his chief diversion. He was something of an authority on Japanese and Chinese prints; he knew tapestries and ceramics; and once I heard him give an impromptu *causerie* to a few guests on Tanagra figurines, which, had it been transcribed, would have made a most delightful and instructive monograph." His collection is most wide, however, and he can read Egyptian hieroglyphics, which helps to make things sticky for the culprit in *The Scarab Murder Case*.

He's an expert fencer, has played on a championship polo team, and his golf handicap is only three. He also knows judo.

An aristocrat by birth and instinct, "His snobbishness was intellectual as well as social. He detested stupidity even more, I believe, than he did vulgarity or bad taste."

He's a cynic, and unusually good looking (Van Dine tells us that John Barrymore, as Hamlet, reminded him of Vance), slightly under six feet, and graceful.

He's well up on the "history of

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religions, the Greek classics, biology, civics and political economy, philosophy, anthropology, literature, theoretical and experimental psychology, and ancient and modern languages." (He studied under Munsterberg and William James.)

He has lead an active "though not gregarious" social life; and while not apparently attracted to women is up on all the latest fashions, not only in clothes but cosmetics—and is thus able correctly to describe a woman by an examination of the cosmetics in her handbag and her gloves in *The Benson Murder Case*.

He knows modern opera and attends symphonic and chamber music concerts with fair regularity. He is also a virtually unerring poker player, which he prefers to bridge or chess, and this becomes crucial in *The Canary Murder Case*. (Knowledge of chess helps in *The Bishop Murder Case*.)

We can see how fortunate Markham was that not only Vane's interest in psychology led him to request a spear-carrier's role in the next important homicide that came up, but that ten more homicidally-inclined persons made the error of following their impulses in the County of New York, each case impinging in some way on one of Vane's vast areas of esoteric knowledge. (We do not, however, get in to the occult or psychic; Mr. Wright felt, and stated in his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction", that Spiritualism, the Occult, etc., should be considered out of bounds—partly, perhaps, because so many bad detective stories of the times had recourse to mediums, etc., to assist the so-called detective's failing wits.)

He has read the Sherlock Holmes stories, and applies The Master's criterion. (When the impossible has been eliminated, then that which remains, however improbable, must be the truth) most successfully in *The Kennel Murder Case*. And here, the improbable truth certainly borders upon the "unknown" for the only solution to one part of the mystery is that the dead man walked upstairs. Vance is also familiar with Edgar Wallace, as he cites a passage from a Wallace novel as the source of faking an apparently locked room, in the same story.

Although I had read *A Study in Scarlet*, prior to the time when *The Bishop Murder Case* ran serially in the *AMERICAN* magazine (either 1928 or 1929), and had been fascinated by Sherlock Holmes and Watson (but bored with "The Country of the Saints"), Philo Vance was my first series detective hero. It wasn't until after I'd read and re-read *The Benson Murder Case*, *The Canary Murder Case*, *The Greene Murder Case*, *The Bishop Murder Case*, and *The Scarab Murder Case* that I got to *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and the three Dupin stories—a year was a long time to wait for the next Philo Vance novel. My interest remained right up to the last one, *The Gracie Allen Murder Case*, but I felt that the series began to fall off after *The Scarab Murder Case*.

However, let's get back to the opening novel, which (along with *The Canary Murder Case*) Fawcett Gold Medal Books has reprinted

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#1, Summer 1966: *Village of the Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *House of the Hatchet*, Robert Bloch; *The Off Season*, Gerald W. Page; *The Tell-Tale Heart*, Edgar Allan Poe; *The Lurking Fear*, H. P. Lovecraft; *The Awful Injustice*, S. B. H. Hurst; *Ferguson's Capsules*, August Derleth; *The Mansion of Unholy Magic*, Seabury Quinn.

#2, Fall 1968: *The House of Horror*, Seabury Quinn; *The Men in Black*, John Brunner; *The Strange Case of Pascal*, Roger Eugene Ulmer; *The Witch is Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *Doctor Satan*, Paul Ernst; *The Secret of the City*, Terry Carr & Ted White; *The Street* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Scourge of B'Moth*, Bertam Russell.

#3, Winter 1966/67: *The Inn of Terror*, Gaston Leroux; *The Other*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Door of Doom*, Hugh B. Cave; *A Matter of Breeding*, Ralph Hayes; *Esmerelda*, Rama Wells; *The Trial for Murder*, Charles Dickens & Charles Collins; *The Blood-Flower*, Seabury Quinn.

#4, Spring 1967: *The Tottenham Werewolf*, August Derleth; *The Secret of Lost Valley*, Robert E. Howard; *Medium for Justice*, Victor Rousseau; *Si Urag of the Tail*, Oscar Cook; *The Temptation of Harringay*, H. G. Wells; *The Tenants of Broussac*, Seabury Quinn.

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## Here Are The Complete Contents of More of Our Earlier Issues

#5, Summer 1967: *The Gods of East and West*, Seabury Quinn; *The Council & The House* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Behind the Curtain*, Leslie Jones; *A Game of Chess*, Robert Barr (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *The Man from Nowhere*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Darkness on Fifth Avenue*, Murray Leinster.

#6, Fall 1967: *My Lady of the Tunnel*, Arthur J. Burks; *The Glass Floor*, Stephen King; *Death from Within*, Sterling S. Cramer; *A Vision* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Aim of for Perfection*, Beverly Haaf; *The Dark Castle*, Marion Brandon; *Dona Diabla*, Anna Hunger; *The Druid's Shadow*, Seabury Quinn.

#7, Winter 1967/68: *The Bride of the Peacock*, E. Hoffmann Price; *Nice Old House*, Dona Tolson; *Those Who Seek*, August Derleth; *John Bartine's Watch*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Pet of Mrs. Lilith*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Man Who Chained the Lightning*, Paul Ernst.

#8, Spring 1968: *The White Lady of the Orphange*, Seabury Quinn; *The Gray People*, John Campbell Haywood (introduction by Sam Moskowitz); *And Then No More . . .* Jay Tyler; *The Endocrine Monster*, R. Anthony; *The Return of the Sorcerer*, Clark Ashton Smith; *The Three from the Tomb*, Edmond Hamilton.

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recently. Re-reading it and the second volume has reaffirmed my original pleasure; and the passage of time and much reading in between has made it possible to catch any number of Mr. Wright's subtle jests that went miles over the head of an eager teenager in the 30's. (They also went over the heads of any number of reviewers of the times, who painstakingly pointed out the faults in the first novel—particularly the blundering of the police—as if the author didn't know better. Nonetheless, *The Benson Murder Case* was a hit in its time, and "S. S. Van Dine" found himself famous and in demand.)

I remember my uncle saying somewhat disgustedly that there was no mystery about who killed Alvin Benson (and Philo Vance wasn't his cup of tea anyway)—and, of course, he was entirely right. There isn't. It's not only absurdly simple, but the simplicity of it is rubbed into the reader's nose a dozen different ways while the police manage not to see what is under theirs. However, Wright does give the astute reader a puzzle—for the only person who could have done Alvin Benson in, under those circumstances, has an excellent alibi, one which gets stronger, seemingly, as Vance patiently assists (and irritates) Markham by demonstrating why none of the other suspects fit the bill. And demonstrating the elements of competent police investigation to the police.

(Nonetheless, after a brief uneasy spell when he first starts to take a hand, Vance gets along well with Sergeant Heath, and by the end of the first novel there is enduring mutual respect and liking between them. Vance may be a dilettante in Heath's



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#10, Fall 1968: *The House of the Living Dead*, Harold Ward; *The Indoor Safari*, Max Nugor; *The House Party at Smoky Island*, L. M. Montgomery; *Settler's Wall*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Island of Missing Ships*, Seabury Quinn.

#11, Winter 1968,69. *Wolf Hollow Bubbles*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *Mrs. Kaye*, Beverly Haaf; *The Haunter of the Ring*, Robert E. Howard; *The Vengeance of India*, Seabury Quinn; *After Sunset*, Phillip Hazelton; *The Ship of Silent Men*, Phillip M. Fisher; *The Whisperer* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes.

#12, Spring 1969: *The Woman with the Velvet Collar*, Gaston Leroux; *The Reaper's Image*, Stephen King; *Sirrush* (verse), L. Sprague de Camp; *Sword for a Sinner*, Edward D. Hoch; *Tiger*, Bassett Morgan; *The City of the Blind*, Murray Leinster.

#13, Summer 1969: *The Gray Killer*, Everil Worrell; *The Scar*, J. Ramsey Campbell; *Where There's Smoke*, Donna Gould Welk; *Ancient Fires*, Seabury Quinn; *The Cases of Jules de Grandin* (article: part one), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Hansom Cab*, Ken Porter; *The Veil of Tanit*, Eugene de Rezske.

**Order From Page 128**

eyes, at first; but at the end of the case, he proves he's anything but the "sissy" the indignant culprit calls him. He saves Heath from at the very least a nasty wound.)

I do hope that Fawcett reprints the entire series; re-reading the first two, as I said, confirms my original delight in them. The two soft cover volumes are well made, and 75c each is a reasonable price for value presented.

One of the advantages of literary creation over natural procreation is that you can select ancestors *ad libitum*. Philo Vance has Dupin's fascination with the psychology of behavior; and, also like Dupin, his range of other interests is wide enough so that he does not suffer from boredom between cases. He has Dupin's capacity to get along with people, and there is never any serious clash with the police, even though he is a snob of the first order. He has no interest in action as a means of solving cases, but is capable of taking care of himself efficiently when involved in it. His variety of expert knowledge gives him an advantage over Markham and the police, even when they are at their best. (And they improve with experience under Vance.) Van Dine is not only Vance's friend, but also his peer.

Both Dupin and Vance are aristocrats, although Vance never becomes a consulting detective; once Markham is out of office, and has no further need for Vance's abilities, he retires from criminal investigation. Neither can be considered democratic in the contemporary liberal sense; both would find John Adams, and some of the other early Federal-

ists congenial in many ways, though both might be at least amused by Mr. Adams pompous manners. The affectations of both Dupin and Vance are artistic-aesthetic, but Vance is never eccentric in the manner of Dupin of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

I do not recall now, it is so long since I read the third to eleventh novels in the series, whether at any time Vance has a personal score to settle with a culprit. My impression is that he remains impersonal in all the cases, although he shows sympathy for or with some of the people involved in *The Scarab Murder Case*, and later ones. And in at least one of the later books, he arms himself for a showdown in the best Jules de Grandin manner—but this is more a matter of indignation at the type of crime rather than the specific party behind it. (I suspect that this is *The Kidnap Murder Case*.)

In at least one instance, he cheerfully condones a murder and, in fact, incites it. The culprit in *The Scarab Murder Case* has arranged so tight and ingenious a frame-up against another party, that to arrest the guilty one will doom the other person. Vance makes certain that a particular party is able to overhear his explanation of the why and how of the case, particularly why it would be impossible to get a conviction, and why it would almost be sure to play into the culprit's hand to try. A little later, the culprit has a fatal "accident".

I cannot think of any other major detective in fiction I have read, who is so clearly a literary descendant of C. Auguste Dupin.

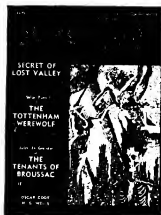
Wright's twenty rules for detective fiction are still generally good ones,

although his insistence against any sort of love or romance interest wasn't good, although understandable—it was so miserably mishandled in so many novels he had read before starting. But a few, to my taste, are particularly apt even today: that the crime be murder; that the culprit be a major character in the story, not a spear-carrier or servant; that the detective *detect*, and not come to the solution through his superiority in violence, or his flair for having lucky hunches; that the motive for the crime be personal, rather than political, etc.; that the culprit not be a professional criminal; and that sufficient sound clues be presented to the reader so that the astute one can follow them through the maze of misdirection and arrive at the solution before the detective does.

Philo Vance does not have the universal appeal of Sherlock Holmes—one can be fascinated, as I was and still am—and had Wright grown tired of him and killed him off, as Doyle attempted to do with The Master, I'd have been disappointed but hardly thrown into trauma as so many were in that terrible year when *The Final Problem* was published. I can read him now and appreciate Wright's snide humor, and also appreciate (Ogden Nash's?) little verse: "Philo Vance needs a kick in the pance." Nonetheless, his adventures did bring pleasure to many, and he ought to be kept alive on the book stands. He's a unique character, and quite beyond imitation. RAWL.

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